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on all things Heavy
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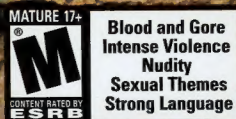
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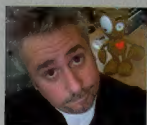
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Letter from the Editor

43

E3 sucks!

The ESA loves to boast about its E3 attendance records, while what's really happening is the systematic dismantling of the time-honored expo format. It's not supposed to be a competition; it's supposed to be an opportunity for retail and press to get the word out on new and exciting games, see what's over the horizon, catch up with publishers and developers, and essentially get our ducks in a row for the year ahead. What it's become instead is an unnecessary drain on publishers' pocketbooks as their booths fill to the brim with mostly people who don't belong there anyway, parked in front of games that retailers—and yes, we'd like to find an open kiosk once in a while—need to see. There were so many people at this year's debacle I'm surprised no one was trampled. Must we have a 15-foot circumference around inflate-a-models for wannabe photo ops, creating a clogged artery of single-file traffic? Does it sell games? They're fake tits, guys, we've all seen 'em...move your asses! Can't we set up a petting zoo for the rent-a-babes or something? Isn't there enough porn on the internet to satisfy these people? Do they need to stand in my way to get a photo op? I have things to do. Photoshop your mug in on the internet and get out of my way!

There used to be a public day for gamers that understandably had to be ditched when they moved to LA (a lovely town...for me to poop on) for security reasons, but is this really the best alternative; essentially opening the show up to anybody with a business card and fudged byline? Once upon a time in Las Vegas (the town where conventions are supposed to happen, where people can actually park and not get shaken down by people that look like they carry the T-virus), we'd set up a booth as a base of operations and greet our readers on public day—I miss that—but now there's no need (the industry already gets Play) and this trade off—this impossible-to-navigate zoo of a show—is a worthless endeavor. I can take meetings with developers all year and with pre-E3 gamers' days see 98 percent of the games before the show and then sit back and wait for online to carry the rest on day one. There's no surprises anymore, no build up, and if there is, they're online within minutes of anyone seeing even the

smallest glimpse. And why schedule meetings? They're nearly impossible to get to, let alone find who you're looking for, so you can stand in the swamp-like conditions and talk about how you'll just hook up for the coverage after the show.

The press conferences used to be cool, but now they're so overbooked they're turning away pre-registered editors and seating us apart. I was alone at Sony's press conference for the first time since the PS launch, sitting next to a guy who admittedly had no reason to be there. He didn't even watch... He was too busy impressing the other people he got in, who *really* didn't care; annoying bastards. And at Microsoft, if you could park, the registration tent was actually dangerous. It's a miracle nobody ended up in the hospital, and I'm not exaggerating. Is it really worth being there anymore? Does it make you "cool"? No, it just makes you gullible. It used to feel like an event for the hard-working people of the industry, but now it just feels cheap and exploited. We're just faces in the herd trying to negotiate the sea of people there to simply stand around and play games.

A lot of companies do E3 right: Konami and Capcom give us access to all their Japan producers, which is great; Sony schedules behind-the-scenes demos for their top games; Microsoft are kings to VIPs (they win hands down, game over); but all around them, it's pure chaos. My best meeting was with Majesco at the bar in our hotel. E3 is just too big and horribly organized. I saw a 100-yard long, four-person-wide line funneling into a steaming tent for badge holders. That's just insane. No game is worth that. It's easier to just get someone in the press or retail to get you one under the table like the other 80 percent of the attendees. E3 sucks.

Dave Halverson Editor In Chief

play magazine staff

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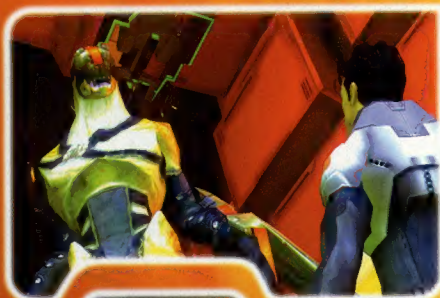


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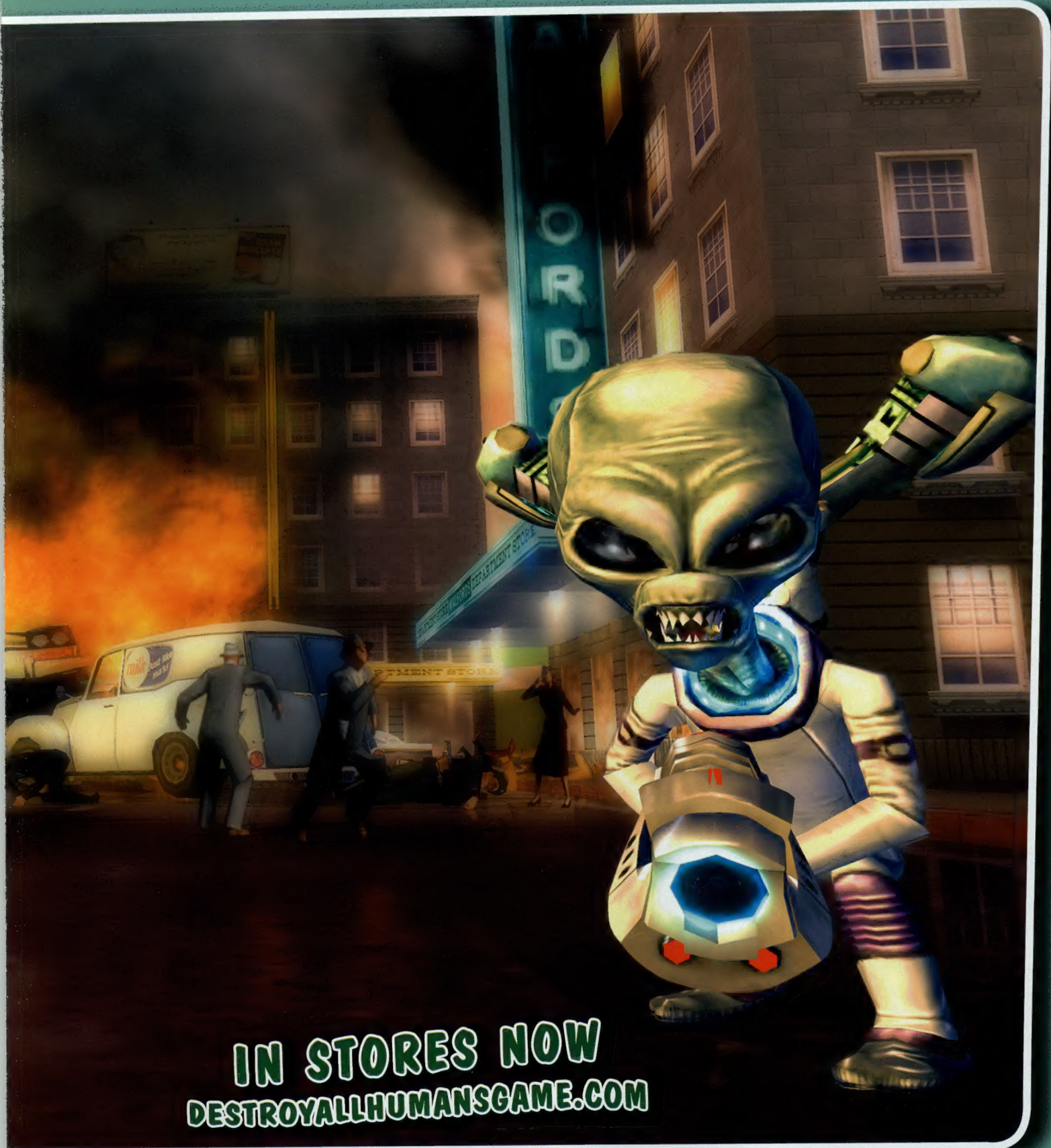
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Sexual Themes
Violence



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Shadow of the Colossus

From the makers of the legendary ICO comes one of the most emotionally powerful games we've yet experienced—a journey to slay the Colossi in order to save a loved one

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E3 2005

The biggest event of the year in gaming has come and gone, and we've got it all: the word on PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Revolution, coverage of the best games, in-depth developer interviews and loads of impressions from the show floor

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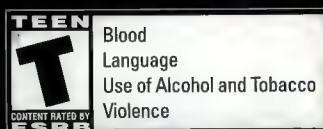
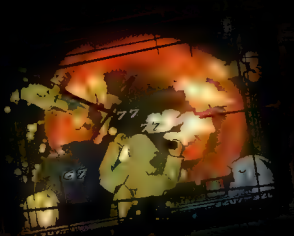
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Hip to be hip

I can't take it any more. I have decided to write to you to vent my frustration because I believe, through reading parenthetical comments in your mag, that you would most likely feel the same way. What am I talking about, you ask? I am talking about the influence of hip-hop in the gaming industry.

I realize that this type of music (absence of instruments notwithstanding) is extremely popular; I don't have a problem with that. But why does so much content in games and the gaming culture seem to revolve around it? Actually, I know the answer, but being a heavy metal man from way back it just wears on me after a while. From driving games to adventure games, and now I see that 50 Cent is going to get his own game. I hope his in-game character is better animated and emotive than his real-life counterpart.

Anyway, this all boiled over for me when I read in another magazine which I usually feel is pretty on the level that *The Warriors*, the '70s movie about which Rockstar is making a game, owes its longevity and cult status to the hip-hop culture! I couldn't believe what I was reading. Is there anything that doesn't owe its existence, success or longevity to hip-hop anymore? Is there anything on the face of this earth that can't relate back to hip-hop?

Here's what the game industry should do, since they've been dancing around the idea for years now: They should just make a game called Hip-Hop, The Game of Hip-Hop. You would play as Joe Hip-Hop, who realizes that hip-hop's been hip-hopped. He would then hip-hop over to the Hip-Hop Club, where King Hip-Hop and his midget servant Hip-Hop would hip-hop the hip-hop. Once hip-hop got hip-hopped, Joe Hip-Hop would hip-hop over to hip-hop and use special hip-hop lingo to tell the Queen of Hip-Hop that he needs to hip-hop her hip-hop. He could then hip-hop a car, and after the hip-hop police try to bust out the hip-hop on his hip-hop, control would switch to Hip-Hop the Hippo, who would hip-hop the hip-hop where hip-hop is waiting for him to hip-hop the hip-hopped hip-hop. Once hip-hop hip-hopped, hip-hop could hip-hop after the hip-hop that hip-hopped his close hip-hop friend that hip-hop hip-hopped back in the age of hip-hop. Your arsenal would include hip-hop, hip-hop, dual fisted hip-hop, and the BFHH. What will happen

to hip-hop? Will hip-hop be hip-hopped? Or will hip-hop hip-hop over the hip-hop? Find out in Hip-Hop, The Game of Hip-Hop.

And as you can guess, the game will owe its success to hip-hop.

Thanks for listening,
Spiders, a heavy metal fan

Can Ozzy be the last boss and bite Hip Hop's head off? You officially rule by the way. I so love our readers.

Looking at Lara

Being a long-time fan of Tomb Raider (at least of the original way back in '96), I wanted to say, I was very excited to see Lara take the cover and the extensive article written in June's issue of Play. From

“...Joe Hip-Hop would hip-hop over to hip-hop and use special hip-hop lingo to tell the Queen of Hip-Hop that he needs to hip-hop her hip-hop.”

the article, it truly sounds like the team wants to bring back that humble, captivating adventure the first TR game held. From the article, it seems there are a few other people that still want to see the captivation of the first game live on with Lara in the next adventure.

At the same time that I am excited for this installment, I have to express my concern. Looking at the trailers for TR: Legend, the clips seem like they reflect a completely different game than your article talks about. The trailers show an action-packed movie with guns blazing, stalking and killing people, explosions and special effects. I for one would truly like to see a more humble Lara that will take gamers on an adventure of exploration where [the] player takes in the detail of the world and its magnificence, not just blazing a trail on adrenaline through firefights (there are plenty of alternatives for this if you want it). Don't get me wrong, I do enjoy a good action game, but I don't think Tomb Raider was made to be an action game. What made the first game wasn't its action aspects; it was suspense and curiosity, wonder and excitement. As I have read recently through forums, it seems my

hopes for the game aren't the majority's opinion, however.

I guess we will have to wait and see what the final game is like. Perhaps those of you at Play can shed some light on my concern as to how these trailers reflect the game in relation to what you have seen or heard.

Depending on the outcome, there is still the first Tomb Raider, Ico, and we can look forward to Shadow of the Colossus!

Asher

We're happy to report that the trailer is not indicative of the game's overall feel, but rather, like most trailers, edited for maximum wow factor. If only they realized we're more wowed by subtlety and intrigue than firefights. They're making your game though, no worries.

A sad state of affairs

Working in a video game store, the employees are bombarded with customers of all walks of life, but almost universally with one goal in mind for each of them: "Does this game make me look cool?" Unfortunately, I'm one of those employees who is forced to deal with such mindless overtures daily.

As well intentioned that I believe your editorial was regarding the proliferation of "thug" games, I think the societal politics you interjected weren't relevant to the situation. The bottom line is simple: is it a good game? Personally, I won't be playing any of the games you listed (50 Cent, 25 to Life, etc.), but not because I don't support inner city violence or vice versa, but because, quite simply, the games will be a colossal waste of time and money. I imagine the cliché of "cookie-cutter" products would verge on literal in this instance.

The fault of these lackluster products doesn't fall at the feet of rappers or any undertones of racial or inner city violence, but those that buy them. Everyday I deal with a majority of customers who

barely speak their own native language coherently, let alone read the packaging past the pretty pictures. They couldn't care less if the \$50 they plunked down had any redeeming quality of the product—they just wanna look really cool to everyone else. You think they care what the NAACP says? You think they even know what it stands for?

I expect that when those games come out, I'll be working the front counter grinding through one apathetic customer after another in search of the latest and greatest fix for their equally indifferent friends to coo over them.

Real video gamers yearn for the days when more than three companies owned every video game on the market...when video gamers weren't smarmy teens and 20-something jocks who think the only games on the market start with "M" and end with "adden"...when there were no politics to think about—just gameplay.

Kip Kirwan

Regardless, I think we're on the same page. Hopefully, things will get better. Lord knows they can't get much worse. How much lower can they sink?

Four-letter words

Lately, I have noticed the language in Play get steadily worse. I know a lot of adults read the magazine (at 35, I'm one of them), but using four-letter words does not make Play magazine appear more adult. In fact, it has just the opposite effect, making the magazine seem juvenile.

Just one example: "using it as a full-screen HUD to scan bosses and easily toggle weapons is the shit." Is that respectable journalism? It's not necessary; it's lazy journalism, and you're better than that.

Regards,
Kent Rittenhouse

We do struggle with this; when is it appropriate to use a slang term like the one you mention to convey excitement or just go with a more tame alternative? I promise it's not to appear more "adult." We're so not about that. We'd love to hear more on the topic.





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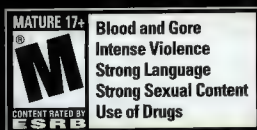




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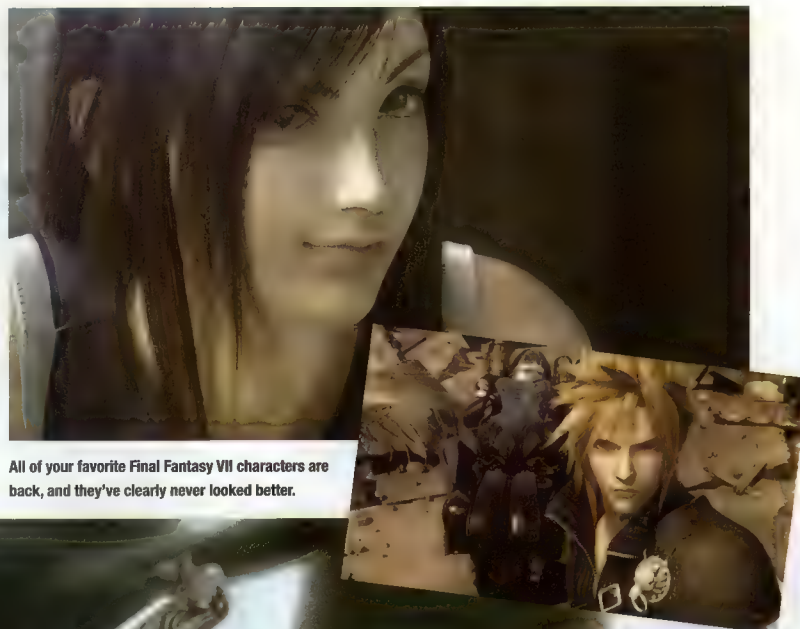
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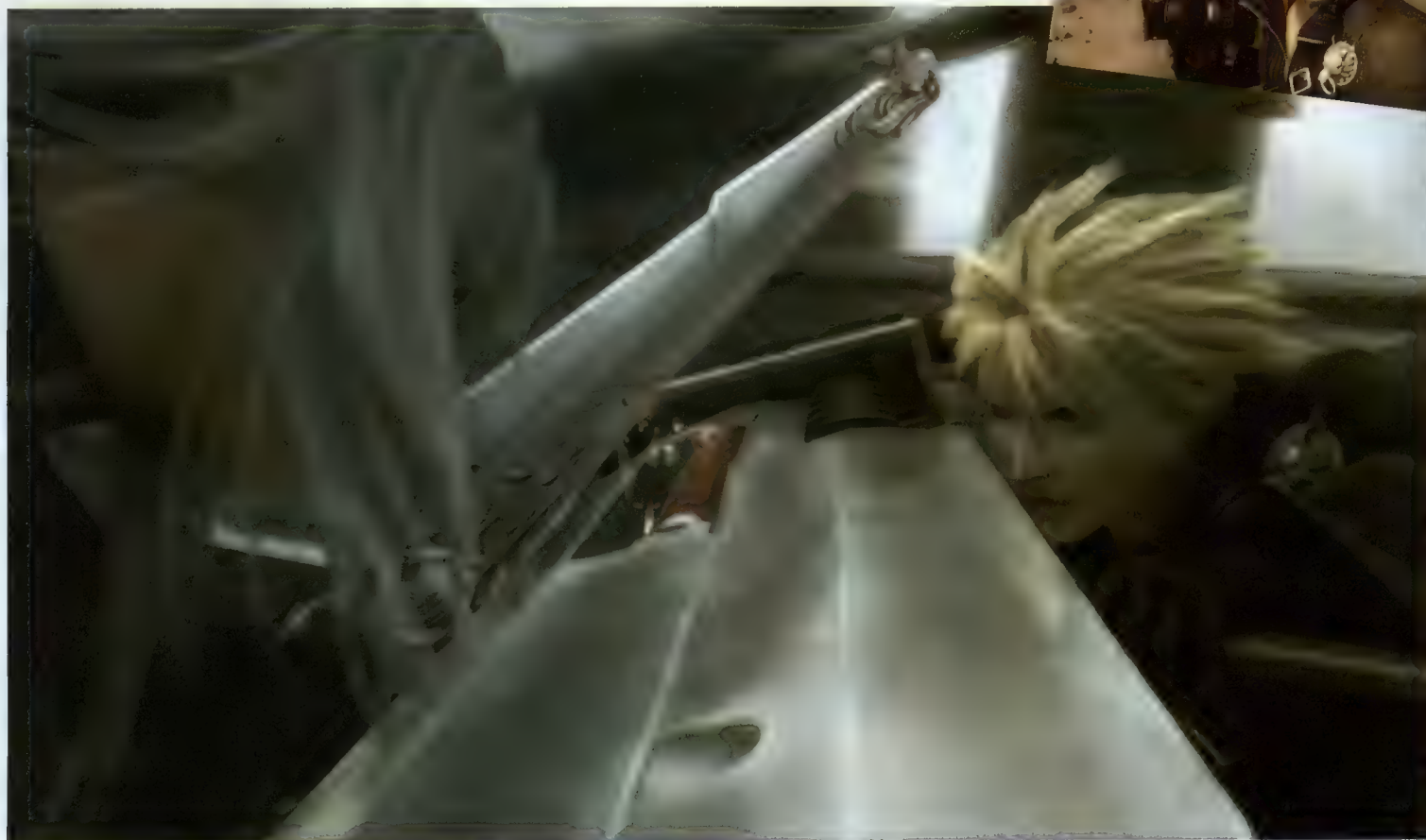
It's been a long time, Cloud

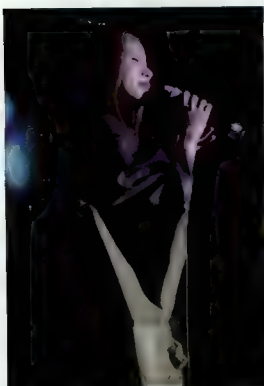
At long last, years of hard work from the masters at Square Enix and years of patience and support of millions of Final Fantasy fans around the world are about to pay off. At a press conference held the week of E3, Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, the CG movie follow-up to the beloved game, was finally given a date for its direct-to-DVD release: September 13, 2005 for North America and September 14 for Japan. A release date for the UMD version was not given, but it is expected shortly after. Along with the announcement, Square Enix unveiled a new trailer for the game, which, unsurprisingly, looked absolutely breathtaking. The trailer dropped more tantalizing hints about the

relationship between Cloud and new villain Kadaj, indicated that the titular children are part of the legacy of the Jenova project, featured an astounding, epic battle between the FFXVII cast and a dreaded Weapon monster, and was capped off with a spine-tingling image of Sephiroth revealing to Cloud that he truly was back—all this in drop-dead-gorgeous CG while the stirring One-Winged Angel theme played in the background. If you haven't seen it yet, go check it out at na.square-enix.com/dvd/ff7ac/. Sept. 13 can't come soon enough.

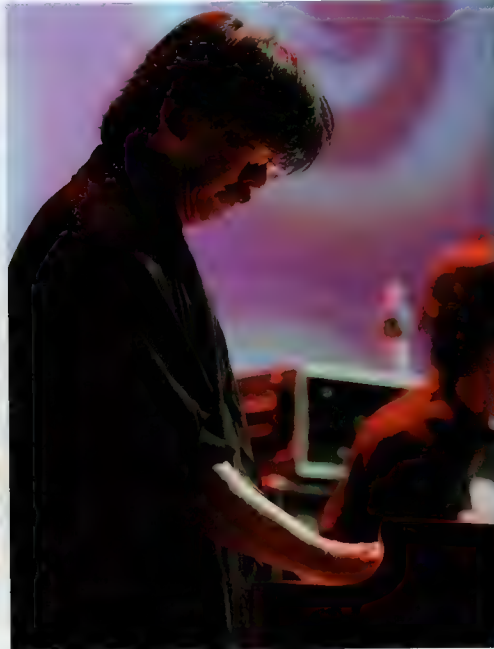


All of your favorite Final Fantasy VII characters are back, and they've clearly never looked better.





"More Friends" included everything from opera to a rocking performance by Uematsu (right) and The Black Mages.



MELODIES OF LIFE

Uematsu rocks at new Final Fantasy concert

Further reinforcing the cultural significance of video game music, Square Enix helped kick off the week of E3 2005 festivities in Los Angeles with a brand-new Final Fantasy orchestral concert. Held Monday, May 16, at the Gibson Amphitheater in Universal City, the "More Friends" concert—a follow-up to last year's "Dear Friends" concert—celebrated the compositions of Nobuo Uematsu with rich renditions of many popular Final Fantasy songs by the World Festival Symphony and CSUF University Singers. Living up to the concert's name, many special guests performed as well, including Uematsu's rock band, The Black Mages (in which Uematsu is keyboardist), singer Rikki, who performed an amazing version of her song *Suteki Da Ne* from Final Fantasy X, and Emiko Shiratori, who sang a stirring

rendition of FFX's *Melodies of Life*. Other highlights included a swing version of the Chocobo theme, arranged by conductor Arnie Roth himself, an actual operatic rendition of the *Maria & Draco* opera from FFXI, and a spectacular version of *One-Winged Angel*, performed by fusing the orchestra's classical style with the pounding sounds of The Black Mages. For fans who weren't able to attend the concert, the original "Dear Friends" concert series is currently traveling across North America, with performances scheduled for Atlanta, GA (June 24 & 25), Fort Worth, TX (July 1), Minneapolis, MN (July 9), San Diego, CA (July 14) and Detroit, MI (July 23 & 24). Square Enix has also made 16 Final Fantasy soundtracks available via the iTunes Music Store.

IT'S A COVER-UP

Tecmo says no to naughty bits

Tecmo has settled its lawsuit against the scoundrels that dared to deface Itagaki's angels (Ninjahacker.net) after four-plus months of legal action. The lawsuit over the alleged misuse of Tecmo's *Dead or Alive 3* and *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, in which the game had been modified so characters could be played in the nude, came to an abrupt close when the judge dismissed the case without explanation after an unspecified out-of-court settlement, thereby extinguishing any chance for what could have been a landmark statement on a user's rights to modify legally obtained software. Tecmo previously won a similar case in Japan against small game publisher Westside, which developed and released Japan-only unofficial add-on discs for *Dead or Alive 2*, which removed the clothes of Kasumi, though this was done for commercial profit, as opposed to the non-profit Ninjahacker site.



TUROC RIDES AGAIN

Gaming's resident fog warrior comes out of it

Buena Vista Games, aka BVG (the interactive entertainment arm of Disney), has obtained the video game publishing rights from Classic Media Inc. (who must have scraped it off the corpse of Acclaim) for *Turok the Dinosaur Hunter*, to design a line of games appropriately aimed at the core gamer audience to be developed by BVG's new Vancouver studio, Propaganda Games, for multiple consoles, handheld platforms and next-generation systems. For the uninitiated, *Turok* and his young friend Andar stumbled across a prehistoric valley filled with nasty dinos in much the same way Jed Clampett struck oil (by accident) in a series of comic books circa 1954, and later (much later) became the poster child for FPS-kind when Iguana Entertainment (which would go on to become Retro Studios) whipped it into a formidable 3D action game on N64 and sold five million copies. With any luck, we'll get a third-person camera (or at least feet) this next go round.



CONTEST

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THQ



DOOMMOVIE

The first great video game adaptation?

The year: 2145. The place: a research base deep in the heart of a far-off planet. The problem: bizarre creatures are redecorating the place. Welcome to *Doom*, the sci-fi thriller based on id's classic first-person shooter. Shot on the mammoth soundstages in Prague and due out on October 21, this violent retelling of the video game stars Karl Urban (*Lord of the Rings*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Chronicles of Riddick*), Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson (*The Scorpion King*, *The Rundown*, *Working Hard*) and Rosamund Pike (*Die Another Day*, *Phide and Prejudice*), who find themselves knee-deep in the death march toward the alien hordes. More to come in an in-depth feature as the movie release date bears nearer...



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With so many mobile devices on the market, mostly packaged with sadistic earpieces, it was only a matter of time before somebody designed a better bud for comfort and sound. Headbanger Audio Ear Subs and Head Subs deliver superior sound quality and, believe it or not, thick, rich bass without sacrificing mid- and high-range sound via Electronic Amplified Subwoofers (or EAS as they've so adroitly coined it) and specially designed "Speed Chamber" ear buds to deliver studio-quality sound. The real trick though? They actually deliver. At \$29-39.95, Ear Subs are far and away the superior sound solution for your iPod, PSP or portable media device. Free yourself from those nasty ear-bleeding treble hooks and drill these into the sides of your head. You won't be sorry.



ANIME ON UMD

More stellar series on the PSP horizon

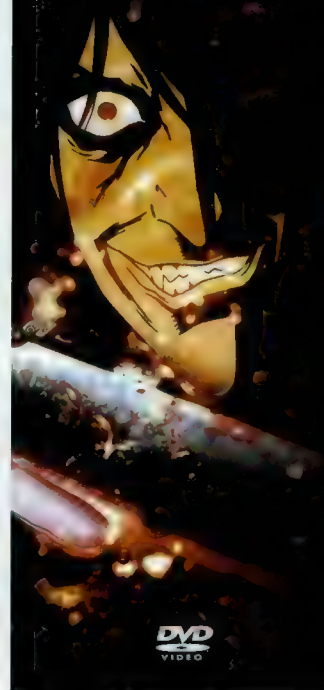
Geneon Entertainment will be unveiling two of their biggest anime series on UMD—*Hellsing* and *Gungrave*—on August 16 at the two-episode (approximately 60 minutes) price of \$14.98, following the debut of their CGI remake of *Appleseed* (already a huge hit in DVD) and the hip-hop samurai action series *Samurai Champloo* on July 5.

Hellsing—a series that absolutely demands a game treatment—tells of an unholy secret war brewing between humanity and a formidable undead opposition (not to mention a special branch of the Vatican that would make the Pope's funny hat spin) revolving around the vampire Arucard, while *Gungrave*, with two games to its credit, segues from drama to hardcore action and bloody mayhem as mob enforcer Brandon Heat embarks on a dark journey back from the dead.



Hellsing

In the name of God, impure souls of the living dead shall be banished into eternal damnation. Amen.



DVD VIDEO

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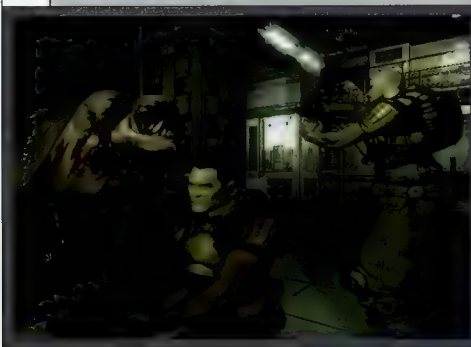
Virgin Megastore Top Ten

01	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas rockstar / xb
02	Star Wars Episode III lucasarts / ps2, xb
03	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition rockstar / ps2, xb
04	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down novalogic / ps2, xb
05	Advent Rising majesco / xb, pc
06	Medal of Honor: European Assault ea / ps2, xb, gc
07	Batman Begins ea / ps2, xb, gc
08	Killer 7 capcom / gc, ps2
09	God of War sony / ps2
10	Psychonauts majesco / xb, pc, ps2



NPD/TRSTS Top Ten April Game Sales

01	Doom 3 activision / xb
02	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition rockstar / ps2
03	Jade Empire microsoft / xb
04	God of War sony / ps2
05	Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory ubisoft / xb
06	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition rockstar / xb
07	MVP Baseball 2005 ea / ps2
08	Lego Star Wars eidos / ps2
09	WWE WrestleMania 21 thq / xb
10	Lego Star Wars eidos / xb

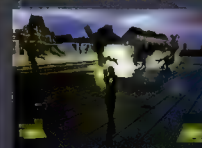


Your Megastore Beckons!



Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
rockstar / xb

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Advent Rising
majesco / xb, pc

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novalogic / ps2, xb

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Top 5 Now Playing and Reader Selections

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Readers' Most Wanted database@playmagazine.com

01	Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess nintendo / gc
02	Final Fantasy XII square enix / ps2
03	Death, Jr. konami / psp
04	Kingdom Hearts II square enix / ps2
05	Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow konami / ds



Dave Halverson editor in chief

01	Conker: Live and Reloaded microsoft / xb
02	Darkwatch capcom / xb
03	Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory ubisoft / xb
04	Death, Jr. konami / psp
05	Malice mud duck / xb



Brady Fiechter executive editor

01	Shadow of the Colossus sony / ps2
02	Killer 7 capcom / gc
03	Psychonauts majesco / xb
04	Conker: Live and Reloaded microsoft / xb
05	Forza Motorsport microsoft / xb



Chris Hoffman senior editor

01	Conker: Live and Reloaded microsoft / xb
02	Psychonauts majesco / xb
03	Destroy All Humans! thq / xb
04	WarioWare: Twisted! nintendo / gba
05	Resident Evil 4 capcom / gc

Michael Hobbs art director

01	Forza Motorsport microsoft / xb
02	Phantasy Star Online: Blue Burst sega / pc
03	Guild Wars ncsoft / pc
04	Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee sony / psp
05	Conker: Live and Reloaded microsoft / xb

Ashley Esqueda associate editor/internet director

01	Psychonauts majesco / xb
02	Still Life the adventure company / xb
03	Arc the Lad: End of Darkness namco / ps2
04	Lumines ubisoft / psp
05	Untold Legends sony online entertainment / psp

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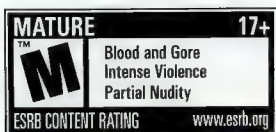
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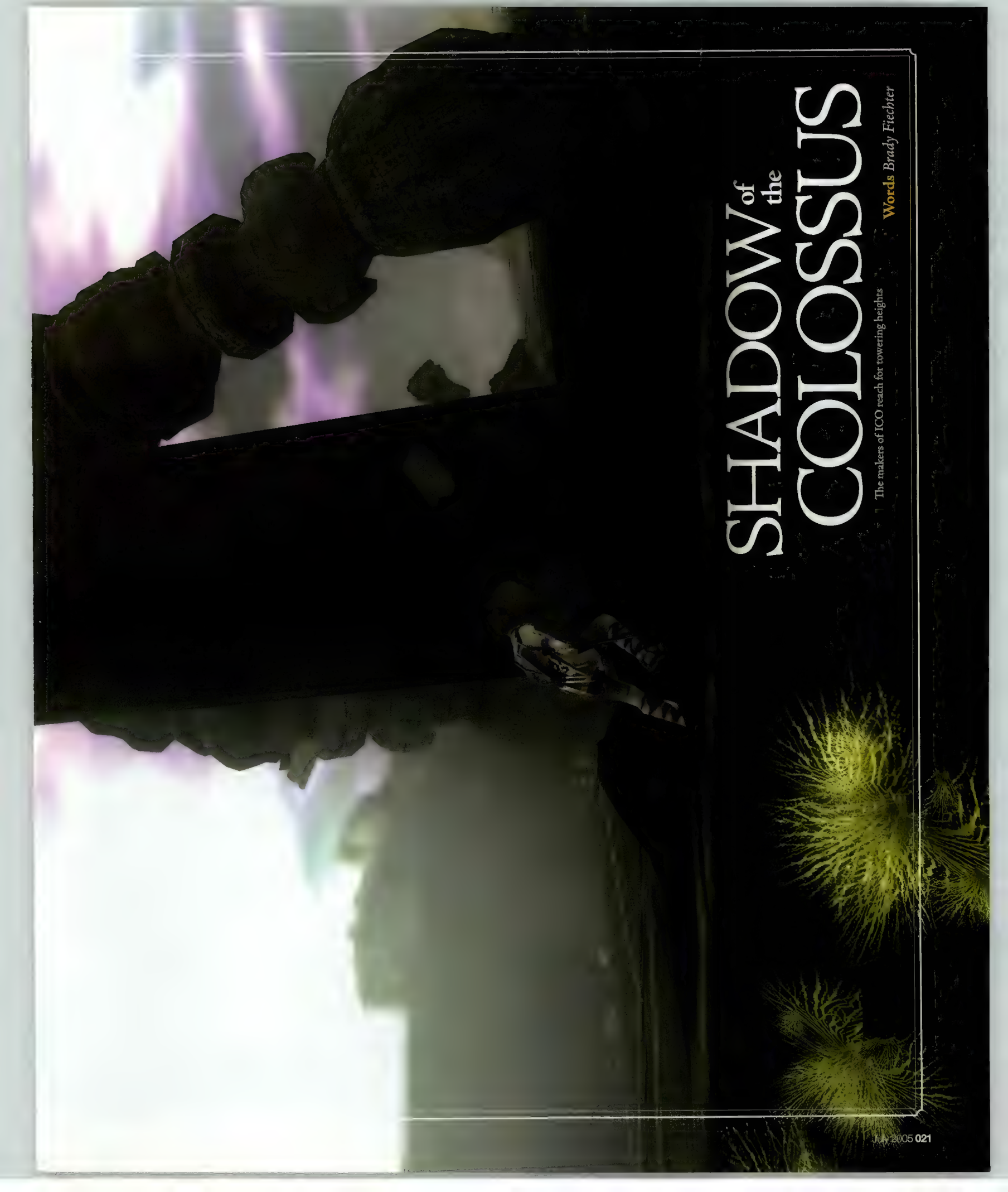
PlayStation 2



ACQUIRE







SHADOW^{of} the COLOSSUS

The makers of ICO reach for towering heights

Words Brady Fiechter

A

young man is slowly, sadly riding his horse through the soggy forest. A lifeless figure rests slumped over the saddle. They are on their way to the temple, where he will lay his delicate lover on the altar in an attempt to recover her lost soul.

The pair have no names, nor does the world to which they have traveled. This place and time exists but with one apparent, essential detail: giant creatures are contained within, and through their death comes life for the fallen girl. You must slay these Colossi, spilling forth their spirit, collecting it for what you believe will be the lifeblood needed to resurrect your love.

This is the moving setup to *Shadow of the Colossus*, the next adventure from the team who brought us *ICO*—a four-year-old PlayStation 2 gem that resonates as a masterpiece with its most passionate fans. *Shadow of the Colossus* is not a sequel to *ICO*, yet more of a spiritual successor of sorts, and you will notice a number of shared qualities between the two games, from distinct use of light and coloring to the overall air of quiet, majestic wonder. Like *ICO*, *Shadow of the Colossus* seems to rise from a group of gamemakers creating from a different place—built with a mindset of an almost spiritual, meditative sensibility.

There is no spoken dialogue in the game of any recognizable dialect, no narrative in the traditional sense. You are to create your own understanding of what is happening, find personal meaning in the task before you. What exactly are these enormous beings inhabiting the land? Can you possibly justify ending their existence and dealing with any consequences for the life of your love? How will you react from their death?

That last question forms one of the more unusual emotional cores to *Shadow of the Colossus*, imbuing the game with a quality of conviction I've never felt before. When you face the Colossi, you first see a remarkable presence before you, majestic and alive in this overpowering place of fantasy. They are as innocent and worthy of life as the character you feel a part of, and you are tasked to destroy them with not an unsettling aggression. When they finally collapse, the music plays to tragedy; the camera pulls far out, revealing a slow, painfully dramatic end.

When I initially spoke to the American

"...I FELT A SENSE OF SADNESS, PLUNGING MY SWORD INTO ONE COLOSSUS' SKULL, WATCHING THE LIFE DRAIN FROM ITS EYES..."

producer before having played the game, he recalls his first encounter with *Shadow of the Colossus*, shaking after the first battle and needing to put the controller down for a moment. Exaggeration? That would depend on how deeply you are pulled into the experience; I felt a sense of sadness, plunging my sword into one Colossus' skull, watching the life drain from its eyes and the trails of black ooze spurring from the wounds as it violently shook me in its final throes. When you play, notice the moment with the eagles circling around you as you reach the top of the Colossus' body, providing a greater sense of vertiginous scale, yes, but crying out as you prepare a dire blow. It was if they were tied into the creature's spirit, existing as one in this natural, beautiful order, creating a setting of tremendous immersion.


This communication of emotion is rare

if not an entirely new experience in a video game, and it can be attributed to a number of factors: the expert creation of mood and tone; the evocative orchestrated music and precise cinematic presentation; the sheer artistry of the visual design; the expressive undercurrents and personal investment; the adventurous build up from a number of aspects to reach the Colossi... And obviously the terrific interactions with the giants themselves, which inspire a genuine awe as you face their towering presence. There are 16 Colossi wandering the land, each offering organic and inorganic obstacles relating to the construct of their bodies. Their monstrous forms become an involved, moving stage for precarious platforming as you carefully scale limb, wing, torso, trunk, horn—whatever bit you can grab onto in an effort to make your way to

See that giant mallet? Imagine beginning your climb for the creature's weak spot there...



"SIMPLY MOVING THROUGH THE WORLD IS A COMPELLING EFFORT, THE ANTICIPATION AND MOOD OF THE JOURNEY YOUR DRIVING GUIDE."



weak spots. The only weapons available are a bow and sword, and pickups and inventory screens are nonexistent.

Reaching the Colossi requires the friendship of your horse, Agro, the only character in the game with a name. Matching the magnificent quality of animation found throughout, the horse moves and feels as such a being actually would, and there are scenes in the game where it will exhibit its own intelligence, building a heartfelt bond as much as a necessary aid in progression. In one battle with a serpent-like Colossus, its one wing the size of an airliner, the horse races along side as you navigate the creature, coming to your rescue as you're tossed toward swirling sand below. What an awesome sequence this is!

The world you're exploring is uncommonly vast in scale and scope, echoing a land of the lost. It's as if you've been dropped into the Grand Canyon, truly feeling the grand openness of it all. There is a simple map to rely on, but navigating the wide-open space requires that you shine the sun on your sword, pinpointing the next area. There is no resistance from Colossus to Colossus, leaving stints of steep environmental interaction to reach

the next plane. You'll cross through ponds and desert, climb mossy embankments and jump over wide passes, hang from ledges and shimmy to the next daunting space.

Simply moving through the world is a compelling effort, the anticipation and mood of the journey your driving guide. I love when you come up to what might seem a familiar stretch of platform navigating, and the area becomes framed as a point of majesty with the movement of the camera, the music informing that there is something mysterious and even a little profound before you. Call it trickery, call it artistry, call it gamemakers taking a common canvas and applying beguiling strokes of color. Like ICO before it, you can stick to the surface and find your individual complaints, but it's the arresting soul to this game that will ultimately triumph.

Shadow of the Colossus

PlayStation 2

Point of Interest

The game is built on a new engine, scrapping the formidable ICO original.

Developer: Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Publisher: SCEA. Online: None. Available: September

INTERVIEW www.ign.com >>



Fumito Ueda

Director/lead artist, Shadow of the Colossus

play: As I play Shadow of the Colossus, there's a very strong spirit of wonder. What type of emotions do you want to stir in the player?

Fumito Ueda: We are trying to stir up players' sense of adventure with Shadow of the Colossus. By finding the ways, players can stand up to humongous monsters that are usually impossible to fight with.

Can you explain how you approach your design process—perhaps define some of the more unique elements that define the look and feel you are looking to achieve in the game?

We are focusing on how to express a large-scaled world.

ICO communicated a deep-felt emotion. Shadow of the Colossus seems to tap into that same vein. In fact, I find it interesting that both games contain an identifiable lead male character who is out to save a delicate, beautiful female character in distress. There is compassion and caring. Am I reaching here, or are there specific, underlying themes you are tapping into?

We are trying to deliver the main objective of the story clearly at the start of the game. I think that the great game story is one that players can easily imagine its ending yet not have any ideas of what is going to happen.

You've chosen to be very cryptic with the story, leaving a basic setup to carry the game through. For me, not knowing what these majestic creatures' intent is leaves me almost sad when I kill them. I don't believe I've ever felt such emotion in a video game; I feel your decision to



When was the last time you actually rode the level?

"WE ARE TRYING TO STIR UP PLAYERS' SENSE OF ADVENTURE WITH SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS."

FUMITO UEDA Director/lead artist, Shadow of the Colossus

leave the story to my imagination is a powerful decision.

I think personally that it is very difficult to keep reality in a video game and express story well at the same time. For the specification of the current hardware, if I want to keep the reality I have in my mind, the story needs to be simple.

The Colossi are the only enemies in the game. Why did you decide this, and were there ever any discussions to provide combat along the path to their destination?

In order for other enemies to exist besides the colossus, I need reason for the existence. For example, the reason may be for players to earn more experience points or obtain items. I wanted to get rid of such troublesome elements and have players focus on the battle with the colossus. Also, even if everything happens in the game, I did not want players to kill recklessly.

One thing I loved about ICO was the interaction with the castle, all the climbing and perilous exploration. You felt connected to the world, rather than simply running through it, clobbering enemies like in most games. Shadow of the Colossus seems to take part of that same approach, providing a world that takes a lot of tangible, methodical interacting.

This will be the same reason to what I answered on the story expression, but as long as I do not want to express the story in plain texts, increasing the space density by using graphics and interactions is the only way to express the story.

Does the majority of the gameplay involve killing the Colossi, or is there indeed a lot of time spent searching for them?

Yes to both.

Could you give an example of what you might consider puzzles in the game?

There are no so-called puzzles (using keys and items) in a stage, but Shadow of the Colossus mainly focuses on the battle against the colossus, and finding the ways to reach their weak points and expose them is the puzzle element. [Using] the E3 version as an example, by attacking the colossus and the position of the colossus is changed, the player gains an opportunity to climb to a new place. There are many variations of such.

Shadow of the Colossus is not a direct sequel to ICO, but would you say you've taken influence from ICO? I sense many similarities that are quite interesting.

It is not a sequel to ICO, but it has the same kind of view of the world.

A friend and I were discussing how the quality of animation often separates a good game from a great game. You seem to understand this, and place emphasis on animating your characters

and world to grand effect. Could you talk a bit about your thoughts on this, and how you approach the animation of your world?

Since I have an animator background, I tend to most focus on animation. However, I think what makes characters worthy enough is the animation (movement) personally. To express humongous creatures, appropriate movement density is necessary, and I am having a difficult time with that.

Many American developers cite ICO as one of their favorite games, and are even influenced by many of its qualities. The game is considered a masterpiece by fans. Does this pressure rest on you as you create Shadow of the Colossus?

Of course the terrible pressure is on us, but I try not to think of it. We are creating the game while viewing ICO as a good rival title.

And the amazing Colossi! How did you come up with such an idea, to have the player search out these creatures and climb them as a central gameplay and story device?

As for the idea, it came to my mind couple days after the master submission of ICO. Basis of the idea is "What kind of game do I want to play?"

And what has influenced their design? Perhaps you can talk a little bit about what inspires their creation, how they fit within the world, what separates one from the other...

As for the design, there is no specific

"OF COURSE THE TERRIBLE PRESSURE IS ON US, BUT I TRY NOT TO THINK OF IT. WE ARE CREATING THE GAME WHILE VIEWING ICO AS A GOOD RIVAL TITLE."

thing that I was influenced by. However, I am trying to focus on the completeness as a whole, which includes backgrounds and characters rather than the completeness of each object. Also, I am trying to create the design that makes an appeal to people who do not play games.

And have the scope and ideas of the game shifted much since you first began creating it?

There are various difficulties including realization of the vast seamless field and Organic Collision Deformation system (the system in which the main character climbs or hangs onto the moving Colossus). However, the game's basic structure has not been changed since the beginning.

What made you want to become a game maker?

Actually, I never thought of becoming a game maker. It is like there are no better positions when it comes to expressing something I want to express.

Finally, feel free to provide any personal comments or observations about Shadow of the Colossus and the games industry in general. Anything at all you would enjoy sharing with our readers.

Our production team is going into the last stage now. Please look forward to it.

FUMITO UEDA Director/lead artist, Shadow of the Colossus

CLOSING COMMENTS OVERLEAF >>

A COLOSSAL PAST

Shadow of the Colossus is being made by the same team responsible for gifting us ICO, a game that is often cited as a work of art as much as a game. The word "art" partly gets tossed around because of a certain emotion contained within ICO that we rarely have the pleasure of tapping into from our game worlds—especially not to such a sustained level. When I play ICO, I experience something as close to the idea of beauty as any game has come. Part of this expression, part of the expression of any art, is that my idea of beauty is unique to me, and ICO happens to contain that beauty; I feel that same expression in Shadow of the Colossus.

When I speak with developers, ICO often passionately comes up in the conversation. Because Shadow of the Colossus shares some of these same qualities that go beyond the distillation of mechanics and code, I thought it might be fun to ask a few developers to share their thoughts on what has become one of the most important achievements in games.



Amy Hennig Game Director, Naughty Dog

For me, ICO showed—maybe for the first time—that games can be art. The starkness of ICO's world, with its echoing vastness and austere beauty, conveys an experience of the sublime the same way a great painting, piece of music, or poetry does.

At a time when so many games are about force-feeding the player *more and more*—new weapons, bigger explosions, hordes of enemies, gorier kills, thrilling sound effects and a driving orchestral score—there's an elegant simplicity, a *stillness*, to the experience of playing ICO that's really beautiful and engaging. I enjoy a Jerry Bruckheimer movie, but I'm not *moved* the way I am, say, by Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets*, or The Beatles' *Across the Universe*. It's the difference between passive consumption and active interpretation. ICO's creators leave room for the audience, letting players imprint their own meaning on the game's world and story—and it's the *interpretation* of the experience that makes it moving, personal and memorable.

Ted Price President, Insomniac

If I could describe ICO in one word, it would be "haunting." Two words would be "hauntingly beautiful." I know a lot of fanboys gush all over this game, but it's for good reason. No other game at the time took such risks with design and gameplay. (And no other game had such incredible lighting and backgrounds.) This game was *not* mainstream by any means. It was, at its heart, a puzzle game with a really unusual core mechanic. There was nothing to blow up (that I remember), no real variation in look between areas (it took place in one castle, after all), and not much of a story other than what you could infer between Ico and the princess. But this sparseness, combined with the amazing environment and perfect ambient sounds, made it one of the more immersive and memorable games that I've ever played. Instead of being distracted by the visual, aural and design cacophony that so many other games offer, it was very easy to get sucked into this quiet and magical world where all I cared about was saving that ghostly little princess.

Tim Schafer President, Double Fine

I loved ICO. It's the kind of game that pops into your mind for no reason, *years* after you play it. Memories about an odd piece of stone architecture, or some light playing on a leaf, the sound of the wind, or the movements of my ghost-like companion—these will come to mind and evoke the unique mental state I fell into while playing that game. The ambiance and feeling of ICO made a permanent impression on me. Also, it's the best example I know of how games have a special ability to tell stories and expose character without a single line of dialog. The mechanic of pulling Yorda around by the hand, her dependence on you, and your dependence on her, is a powerful depiction of a human relationship, and it's done completely without words. Usually, a game's most emotional moments, the most revealing and dramatic, naturally end up in the cinematic sequences—with all their carefully controlled shots, music and dialog. But in ICO, the most emotional and revealing moments are interactive. And I can't think of many other games that pull that off.



A journey to think about...

In Japan, *Shadow of the Colossus* is being called *Wanda and the Colossus*. Wanda is actually an approximation of "wonder," referring to the spirit of the young man and his quest. The name change has been decided for obvious reasons, but the original Japanese title speaks volumes on what the game is all about: wonderment is its nourishment. It takes me back to the purity of mind as a child, falling into the graces of a storybook, filling in the open spaces with a willing imagination.

Is it ultimately a complete success? Will it follow in the footsteps of *ICO*? First impressions say yes, but it's still too early to pass final judgment. But even now, *Shadow of the Colossus* inspires further thought. You can speak of the game in so many broad strokes of emotion that extend so far outside of the familiar game reaction. There is something that transcends the technical. We tend to constrictively intellectualize our games (and the world for that matter) to a dreadful degree these days, leaving out the emotion we can feel when a game just seems to work, when the technical no longer exists and the inner body of the experience takes hold.

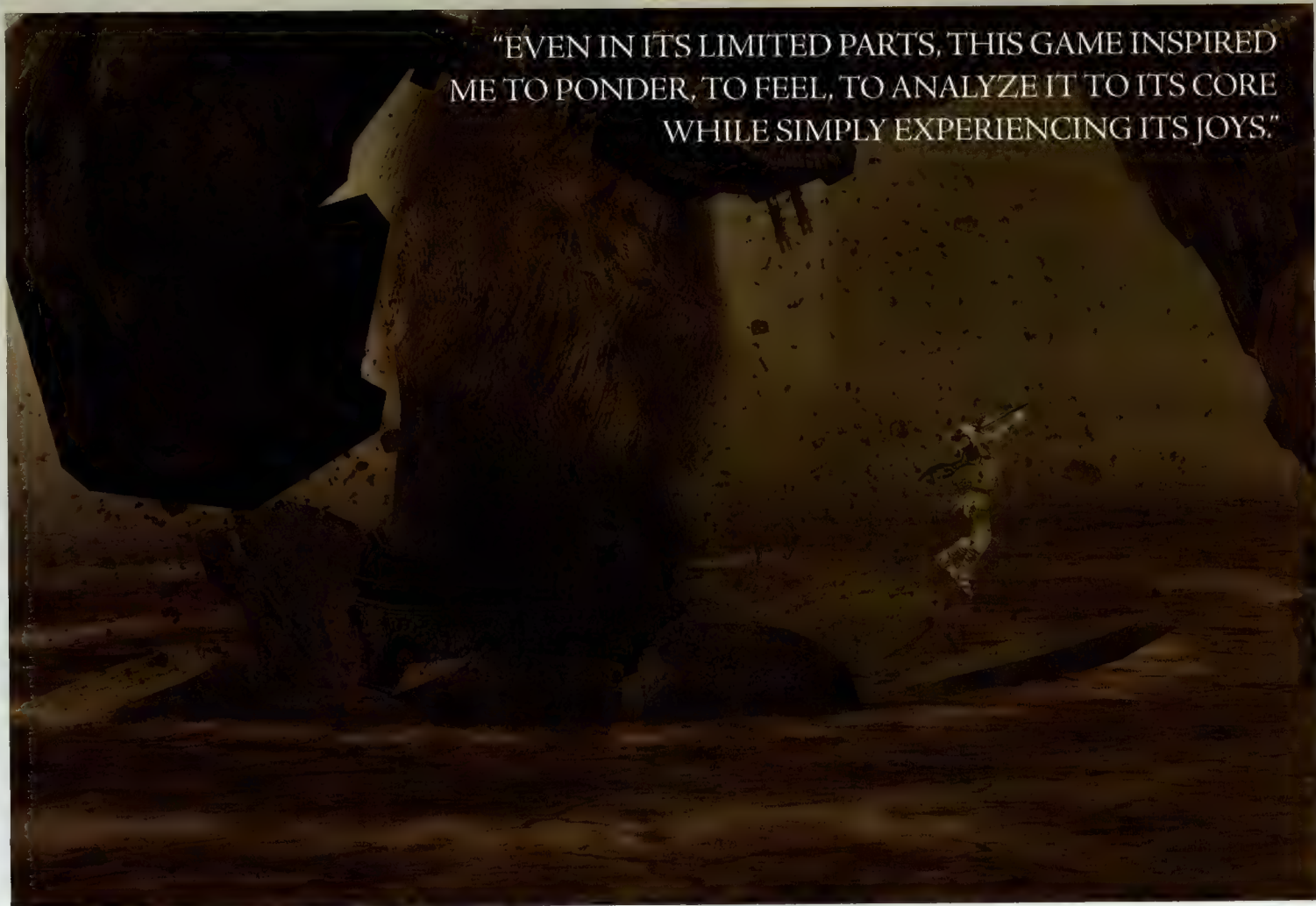
Even in its limited parts, this game inspired me to ponder, to feel, to analyze it to its core while simply experiencing its joys. There are themes and allegory within its walls. Like *ICO*, you feel compassion—both contain a boy out to save a vulnerable love, forming a bond that drives you beyond familiarly experiencing gameplay; you feel an urgency, a basic need to protect. Your heart is involved.

I'm struck by how caught up I was with the first Colossus encounter. The palpable tension of hanging on for dear life as the giant creature reacted to my assault. The awe of the design, watching it move with such immense force and mass, shaking the earth and my emotion along with it. These Colossi are living levels; tackling one offers more payoff than entire games. Merely watching it in motion is heartfelt.

Shadow of the Colossus is important for discussion in an industry where we don't have many games worth such discussion. I love that I could take a single segment and find a wellspring of ideas to question. We have plenty of neat games, but are often left with nothing but a fun way of passing the time. My brief stint with *Shadow of the Colossus* left me touched. **play**



"EVEN IN ITS LIMITED PARTS, THIS GAME INSPIRED ME TO PONDER, TO FEEL, TO ANALYZE IT TO ITS CORE WHILE SIMPLY EXPERIENCING ITS JOYS."



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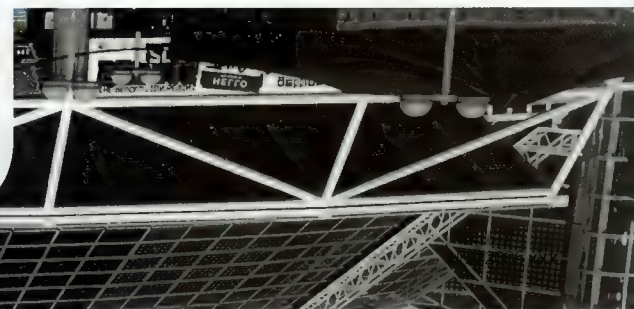
*TBD, but it will be something good



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Photos Michael Tran





NEW HARDWARE

Sony wants to Cell you a new system

Sony PlayStation 3

Pushing the limits of technology

Words Mike Griffin

If Microsoft chose the Hollywood route to unveil their next-gen system to the world, Sony went through Silicon Valley to introduce the PS3. SCE's announcement presentation was strictly by the books, offering a perfectly calculated assembly of industry VIPs, highly technical hardware evangelizing and pristine demo clips.

Sony Computer Entertainment America president Kaz Hirai and SCE head Ken Kutaragi wore confident grins as they introduced their company's "supercomputer for computer entertainment," announcing a spring 2006 release window for the PlayStation 3. Thankfully, promotional hyperbole was kept to a minimum as the all-star cast of industry bigwigs rolled out.

SCE chief technical officer Masa Chatani demonstrated the PS3's incredible dual-HD output and its ability to produce true 32:9 panoramic widescreen. The tandem digital outputs may also be used to add functionality during gameplay, such as placing real-time video chat on a second monitor while playing a game on the main screen. Nvidia CEO Jen-Hsun Huang explored the system's display capabilities further as he introduced the PS3's graphics processor, the RSX "Reality Synthesizer." Capable of 100 billion shader operations per second and packing more transistors than any commercially available processor, Huang indicated that the RSX on its own is more powerful than two GeForce 6800 Ultra video cards. The RSX has a very close relationship with the Cell processor, however. The Cell can draw from the graphics memory and the RSX can dip into main system memory, or vice-versa, and both chips operate on independent bi-directional memory pathways so there's no contention for bandwidth; it's completely transparent. In fact, the RSX



"...Kaz Hirai and SCE head Ken Kutaragi wore confident grins as they introduced their company's 'supercomputer for computer entertainment...'"

"...this sequence of 'gameplay' is still debatable, but Sony is unyielding in its assertion that Killzone 2 was a PS3-powered real-time sequence."

can interact directly with a simulation being calculated by the Cell while the Cell can directly refer to an object the RSX has just added shading to. The Xbox 360 has more raw system bandwidth than the PS3, but this bi-directional communication between the RSX and the Cell (and its seven cores) may prove to be the more enduring and versatile configuration as next generation development matures.

Kutaragi expanded upon the Cell's unique capabilities. Where the 360's CPU strength lies in conventional integer calculations (general purpose processing), the Cell has phenomenal floating-point calculation designed to dynamically generate objects and simulations. Microsoft's direction makes sense when applied to *current day* game design, as the GPU handles most of the streaming floating-point stuff in current games, like processing geometry. Sony is well aware of this, and it is positioning the Cell as a hardware catalyst for game development evolution. For conventional development, the Cell's seven synergistic cores represent an exciting opportunity for specialized programming. As Epic's Tim Sweeney wrapped-up a mind-blowing real-time demo of Unreal Tournament 2007, he said the PS3 was "easy to program for," having ported the Unreal Engine 3 to the system in a couple of months. Where Microsoft criticized the Cell's cores for their lack of cache, developers like Sweeney seem to be intrigued by the idea of pushing very specific code—like physics—to one of the Cell's cores, citing the defined local memory of each core as a reliable yardstick for development. As developers discover similar ways to exploit the Cell's cores in concert with the RSX, we'll begin to see new examples of AI and world behavior—from simulated microbiology to complex weather patterns—and it won't dent the integrity or performance of the predominant action or simulation.

The PS3 demos continued their dazzling parade. EyeToy inventor Dr. Richard Marx used the PS3's wireless HD camera and a couple of plastic cups to scoop up water from a virtual tub and splash it around. The PS3 seamlessly generated physics and water simulation on screen in real-time. Back on the gaming track, an incredibly detailed London

was shown in The Getaway 3, Bandai had impressively modeled Gundam mechs, Ubisoft introduced their new FPS franchise Killing Day, Evolution Studios contributed an unbelievable reel from their off-road racer Motor Storm, and Incognito had some hot footage from the Warhawk sequel. Square Enix president Yoichi Wada drew gasps and applause as Final Fantasy VII footage began, featuring the classic CG cinematic leading up to Cloud leaping off the train—now fully rendered in real-time. The gaming world simply wasn't prepared for what came next: the Killzone 2 demo. Considering its flawless camera direction and hyper-stylized scripting, the interactivity of this sequence of "gameplay" is still debatable, but Sony is unyielding in its assertion that Killzone 2 was a PS3-powered real-time sequence. At any rate, the incredible footage that mesmerized the entire industry showcased CG feature film-quality marines dropping down into a war torn futuristic city. Thick plumes of smoke—the best game smoke you've ever seen—trailed behind missiles and damaged air support. The quality of the environments, vehicles and particle effects is completely untouchable: miles ahead of anything we've

Nice Curves: The PS3 has a shape similar to the PS2, but much more rounded.



seen, including all the other next-gun stuff. Hence the cautious skepticism.

The PlayStation 3 introduction was a huge success for Sony, easily deflating the PR lead that Microsoft fostered in the week leading up to E3. Besides the processor and game demonstrations, the PS3 feature set includes many important forward-looking perks like built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, a detachable 2.5" hard drive, six USB slots

and support for SD, CompactFlash and Memory Stick Duo. The confirmed out-of-the-box backwards compatibility with PS2 and PS1 games is another great feature. The only area that suffered mixed reactions at E3 was the Batarang-esque wireless controller, but Sony probably has about nine months to consider a design revision before PS3 manufacturing finally begins in early 2006.

We don't really need to write anything here to tell you how good this Fight Night demo looks, do we?



NEW HARDWARE

Let the Revolution begin



Nintendo Revolution

From gaming's roots to gaming's future



While Sony and Microsoft were trying to outdo each other with impressive specs and outrageous claims, Nintendo made their own strong statement with their debut of Revolution at their pre-E3 press conference: it's all about the gamers, it's all about the games, it's all about the developers. In a week filled with so much hype, Nintendo's take was refreshingly simple; there was little emphasis on too-good-to-be-true tech demos and no plans to become the end-all and be-all of home entertainment—just the sleek black box called Revolution, scheduled for release in 2006. With its compact size and modern appearance, the Revolution could mesh easily with anyone's home entertainment setup, but it's really the games that count. Nintendo president Satoru Iwata revealed that a new Super Smash Bros. game is being readied for the Revolution's launch, while other games in favorite franchises like

Zelda, Mario and Donkey Kong are also in development. Iwata stated that Shigeru Miyamoto was working on a brand-new property for Revolution as well, though he wouldn't go into specifics, and a very brief tech demo of Metroid Prime 3 was also shown. Similar to but different from GameCube discs, Revolution games will come on 12-cm optical discs that self-load through the front of the unit.

Aside from these new games, however, came the exciting revelation about backwards compatibility. In addition to the previously revealed ability to play GameCube games, the Revolution will give players the ability to download all of Nintendo's games released for previous consoles. That's 20 years worth of NES, SNES and Nintendo 64 classics—more than enough to instantly attract anyone who considers themselves a gamer.

"We will show the world what a next-gen

...Nintendo's take was refreshingly simple; there was little emphasis on too-good-to-be-true tech demos..."

system can be," Iwata stated. "Revolution marries the strongest heritage of innovation to the future of gaming. With backward compatibility and the 'virtual console' concept, the stylish, compact body provides maximum gaming power. It will not only take home entertainment into another dimension by expanding the definition of video games, but it also will give you access to the great history of gaming."

Nintendo further appealed to the heart of the industry with the promise of an affordable and easy development environment, allowing upstart developers as well as blockbuster-minded corporate behemoths

to produce games for the Revolution, hopefully eliminating some of the financial risks involved with new ideas and reversing the me-too spiral that so much of game development has become.

In terms of specs, Nintendo wasn't ready to reveal a whole lot before its time, but a few technical aspects were announced: the Revolution will have 512 MB of internal flash memory, which can be expanded via SD memory cards; controllers will be wireless; the system will have two USB 2.0 ports; an attachment will be available for playing DVD movies; and the machine comes Wi-Fi enabled for internet play over the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, a service that will be pioneered by the DS this fall. However, Nintendo still didn't reveal the nature of the Revolution's controller (although if it can play all games for previous systems, it can't be anything too extreme), nor did they announce a specific release date or price. Judging from their presentation, whether Nintendo wins the next console war is irrelevant; they're poised to win the hearts of gamers (again) and breathe new life into the industry.

MAKAI KINGDOM

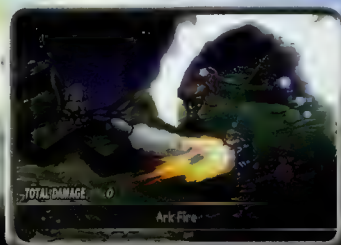
Chronicles of the Sacred Tome

Strategy RPG returns with a BANG!

Nippon Ichi Software launches Makai Kingdom,
the newest line of Strategy RPG!



Lord Zetta is the strongest Overlord in the Cosmos! Take back your world and restore your body!



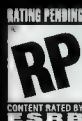
Use various tanks... robots, drills, bikes, and so on. Customize your vehicles!!



More freedom than you ever imagined! Throw buildings around! Attack with tanks!?



Create your own characters! There are many different jobs and monsters to choose from!

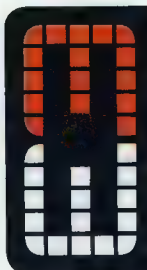


Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.



PlayStation®2





PERSONAL VIEW

Dave Halverson



Yes, the PS3 is a beast...but so is the Xbox 360, and for that matter the Revolution. They're all very different beasts, which is a very good thing. Just remember that at the end of the day, content is king. How good any game is—especially given the most recent leap in technology—lies solely in the hands of their respective developers. The front lines look different this time; let's all hope that mad porting gives way to three uniquely individual consoles. Here's my take on E3 2005: The Herd Wars...

TOP 10 PLAYABLE DEMOS

E3 sucked, but these games made it all worthwhile... well, almost.

The Legend of Zelda Twilight Princess

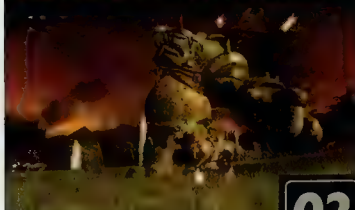


GameCube, Nintendo

01

Gameplay will always triumph over technology. I don't care if the other guys bump map the bump maps, I wouldn't hesitate to say that this installment of Zelda will likely go down as the greatest game ever made and reign as such for many years to come.

Kameo: Elements of Power



Xbox 360, Microsoft

02

Completely rebuilt (yet again) for the Xbox 360, words cannot describe the majesty of Rare's latest fantasy epic. Wall-to-wall eye candy and TM Rare gameplay devices aside, they've added transparency to Kameo's host monsters and added insane new scenarios to the gameplay that truly flex the 360's muscle. ... But alas, a big, green, conservative Xbox fly has crashed into the ointment with the decision to neuter Kameo's already microscopic sex appeal (you know, for all those 8-year old early adopters and their mommies who can't wait to play 360 games) to go with the game's new mainstream guise. Skew younger as the audience ages! Yeah!!

Gears of War



Xbox 360, Microsoft

03

Strike-team warfare injected with a mega dose of next-gen gameplay devices and visuals so rich I nearly wept and wet myself simultaneously. The most technologically advanced *playable* game I have ever seen. I want this game HARD. It's high time Epic stepped out of first person into a true single-player epic (and no more giving me grief about our 7.5 for Liandri).

Tomb Raider Legend



PS2, Xbox, Eidos

04

Poetry in motion. Dynamic collision, gorgeous environments, the perfect combination of classic TR gameplay devices and all-new features culminate in the quintessential adventure game. Crystal has absolutely nailed the new Tomb Raider. Next stop: 360! Lara is so very back.

Ninja Golden Black



Xbox, Tecmo

05

Perfection perfected. New missions and modes; Hurricane packs 1 & 2, plus five levels of difficulty from "Ninja Dog" (team Ninja speak for "hard") to "Very Difficult Master Ninja."

Darkwatch

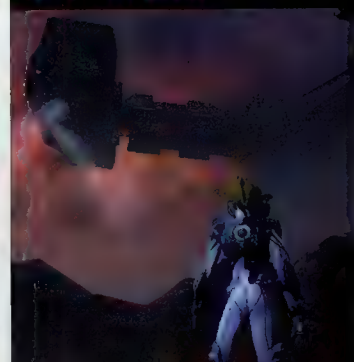


Xbox, Capcom

06

An FPS on my top 10? Ah, but Darkwatch is so much more, incorporating vampiric powers, weaponry and vehicles, adrenaline-charged horseback scenarios, crazy detail, award winning CG, high art... and, of course, Tala and Cassidy.

StarCraft: Ghost



GC, PS2, Xbox, Blizzard

07

Swingin' Ape has put their stamp on Nova's stealthy exploits to such a degree that it was actually worth the wait.

Okami



PlayStation 2, Capcom

08

The most innovative adventure game of this E3 is also one of the most artistic and graceful. Clover Studios' skillful art direction has never been more apparent.

Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes



Xbox, Microsoft

09

Somehow Phantagram managed to up the graphics ante and polish the gameplay, on top of adding 50 new scenarios to this stunning prequel.

Phantasy Star Universe



PS2, PC, Sega

10

I've waited a very long time for a true sequel (since the \$100.00 Phantasy Star IV on Genesis to be exact), and Sonic Team is pulling out all the stops: Amazing interiors, awesome field battles and so much more.



Killzone PS3

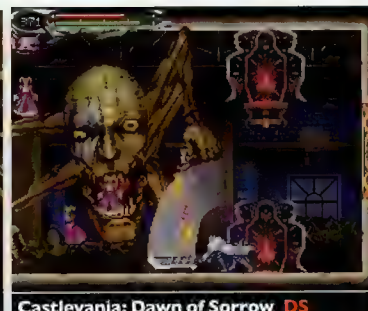
TOP 10 FOR THE ROAD

My DS began life as the bastard child tucked away in a drawer underneath my PSP's charging perch, but after E3, it's my big, bright, shining star of 2D bliss. Way to bounce back, Nintendo!

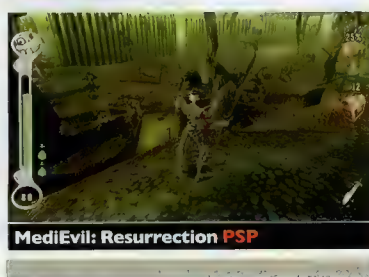
- 01 Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow DS Konami
- 02 Gunstar Super Heroes GBA Sega
- 03 Sonic Rush DS Sega
- 04 New Super Mario Bros. DS Nintendo
- 05 MediEvil: Resurrection PSP SCE Cambridge
- 06 Death, Jr. PSP Konami
- 07 Viewtiful Joe DS DS Capcom
- 08 Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers DS Majesco
- 09 Dexter PSP SCEA
- 10 Johnny Whatever Gizmondo Warthog



Johnny Whatever Gizmondo



Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow DS



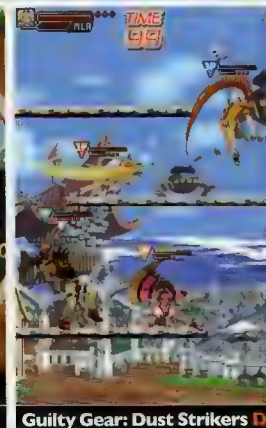
MediEvil: Resurrection PSP



Gunstar Super Heroes GBA



Sonic Rush DS



Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers DS

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENTS

NOW WITH MORE TEXT!

1) The show itself, which is now impossible to navigate, absurdly loud, humid as a swamp, and as industry unfriendly as it can possibly get. 2) One step forward, two steps back for Kameo. Completely rebuilt graphics and amazing new 360 gameplay are tarnished by the odd decision to downgrade what little sex appeal she had to go with the game's new G-rated guise. So now, who are they doing this for? It's a move on par with showing up with zero single-player Perfect Dark Zero starring a "new" and oh so not improved Joanna that looks like a skinny Roseanne Barr. 3) What's that banana-rang thing that looks like a controller Sony was showing? 4) Where's

my Konami? The once-stalwart Japanese superpower has resorted to awkward cartoon fare such as Winx Club, Frogger remakes and another round of mediocre Turtles games, plus (gulp) an ugly UK-developed thug game: Crime Life: Gang Wars. From the house Kojima and Iga built? I don't think so. And Iga is out of his element in 3D. Lament was good, Nanobreaker p-bad, and Curse of Darkness doesn't hold a candle to Symphony of the Night or Dawn of Sorrow (Konami's best game). Symphony is considered one of the best games of all time, yet Konami seems adamant about not making another 2D version for console. That's just plain crazy. Death, Jr.,

the non-butchered Ys for PSP, Coded Arms and Dawn of Sorrow are Konami's best titles... four handheld games, one of which they acquired. MGS4 is huge, of course, but far, far away. Take away MGS and Konami barely looks like Konami. Why no Sparkster or Axelai sequel in lieu of crud like Frogger or some thug tragedy? Or better yet, remake Bayou Billy! We love you Konami, the way you were. Let THQ make Winx Club and get back to business.

"Symphony is considered one of the best games of all time, yet Konami seems adamant about not making another..."





PERSONAL VIEW

David Halverson Editor at Large



VERDICT: BEST OF GENRE

They came, I saw...these win

MOVIE-BASED

The Matrix: Path of Neo Xbox, PS2, PC Atari

Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe Xbox, PS2, GC Buena Vista Games

ACTION-RPG

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess GC Nintendo

Phantasy Star Universe PS2, PC Sega

ACTION-STRATEGY

Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes Xbox Microsoft

Battalion Wars GC Nintendo

RPG

Magna Carta: Tears of Blood PS2 Atlus

Spore PC EA



ADVENTURE HORROR

Condemned: Criminal Origins Xbox 360 Sega

Dead Rising Xbox 360 Capcom



ACTION-ADVENTURE

Gears of War Xbox 360 Microsoft

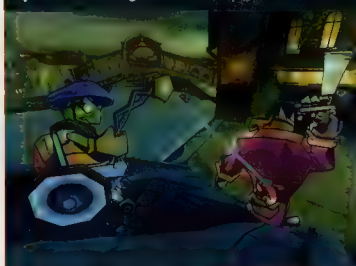
Tomb Raider: Legend Xbox, PS2 Eidos



ACTION-PLATFORM

Kameo: Elements of Power Xbox Microsoft

Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves PS2 Sony



FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

Darkwatch Xbox, PS2 Capcom

Quake IV Xbox 360, PC Activision



FIGHTING

Dead or Alive 4 Xbox 360 Tecmo

Soul Calibur III PS2 Namco



ANIME/CARTOON OR COMIC-BASED

Ultimate Spider-Man GC, Xbox, PS2, PC Activision

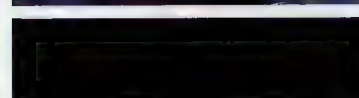
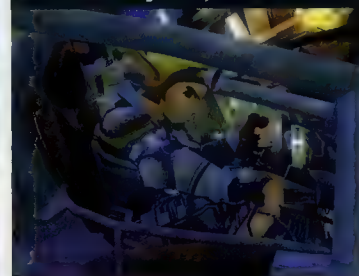
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex PSP Bandai



RACING

Full Auto Xbox 360 Sega

Jak X: Combat Racing PS2 Sony



THE REALLY GOOD STUFF

Respect their authority!

1) The Micro GBA! A keychain-sized GBA game player with the brightest, sharpest screen Nintendo's ever developed? Pure genius! I can wear Gunstar Heroes or DKC around my neck... please, this is too good. 2) Capcom: Once again sticking to their guns, Capcom deftly juiced their awesome in-house lineup with a triple-A FPS in Darkwatch and a great little platformer, JoWood's Legend of Kay. Elsewhere, the Classics Collection is superb, Okami a breath of fresh air and everything else exactly as it should be. They even brought back Final Fight (well, sort of). Now if they'd just give us that next Strider... 3) Gizmondo. It's a cool 3D portable yes, but more importantly, it's a powerful global tracking device! They can place a marker in your

neighborhood (or anywhere in the world for that matter) and transition from game to the real world, sending you on a real-time real world quest complete with a VR guide who rises out of a card you hold in front of the lens! Crazy! How about a real-time coupon or discount beamed down to use at a local participating business depending on where you are on the planet? They scan your Gizmondo when you get there! (Smart ads are standard on the \$199 model over the \$229 model.) It also works as the ultimate easy-to-use PDA. A must-have device. 4) And finally, kudos to Nintendo for showing no hardware before its time. I prefer my new hardware launches with a controller attached, thank you very much. Great show for DS too.

BEST BOOTH: MICROSOFT

Microsoft's VIP-friendly mini-metropolis is the best booth ever created, period.

WORST BOOTH: ELECTRONIC ARTS

EA's prison in the round was packed for one reason... no way out!

BURIED TREASURES

...and honorable mentions

The Matrix: Path of Neo PS2, Xbox, PC Atari

Leave it to Shiny to invent a way to simulate bump mapping on PS2 and reenact the burly brawl in real-time: two technological achievements for the PS2 you'll have to see to believe.

Aquanox: The Angel's Tears JoWood

JoWood's beautiful underwater shooter was the only bright spot for console shooter fans (that ain't right, by the way).

Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks Midway

Midway took up residence in a completely zoned Petree Hall this year, but if you could get close, MK Shaolin Monks was looking pretty great.

Genji Sony

The Game Republic's first offering looks like an Onimusha killer. One of the prettiest and well-structured samurai games I've ever seen.

Sonic Gems Collection Sega

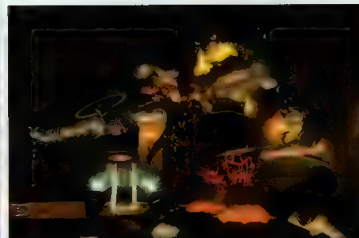
Sonic CD (with the jury still out on the BGM), Sonic R and Sonic the Fighters. Hear us, Sega, and include that Japanese BGM!



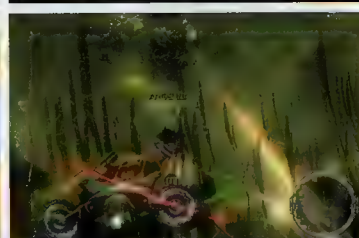
Genji PS2



Sonic Gems Collection GC



Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks PS2, Xbox



Aquanox: The Angel's Tears PS2



PERSONAL VIEW

Chris Hoffman



PERSPECTIVE

Fewer big games, more crazy crowds

If I were to sum up the 2005 E3 in one word, it would be "underwhelming." There was a lot of talk, not as much action as I would have liked, and very few playable surprises. If it weren't for the unveiling of the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and (to a lesser extent) the Nintendo Revolution, I probably could have slept through half the show, but even the new consoles left me feeling unfulfilled. As far as I'm concerned, the PlayStation 3 is just so much concept footage until I get a controller in my hand, and the 360 games were still running on G5-based developmental hardware (which, according to the developers, is why so many of the games were suffering from frame rate and refresh rate problems). Still, Sony's PS3 demos and Sega's next-gen footage looked incredible (Sonic and Afterburner look especially fantastic), and I hope it won't be long before these games are in our hands and not just on a giant screen.

As for current consoles...well, it's easy to tell that this is a transition year. Part of my apathy comes from already knowing what to expect. Zelda was absolutely awesome—getting to finally control the most incredible-looking Link yet in epic battles atop Epona was a blast—but I pretty much already knew that going in, and even the wolf angle was no surprise (nor was it playable in the demo). Similar things could be said of other current-gen games, as many of the titles were sequels that, though really fun games that I can't wait to play more of, were rather predictable. At least Okami was around to blow me away. I'd had a peek at that one before too, but until I actually got to play the game, I had no idea what a unique treat I was in for.

If you look at my E3 top 10 list, you'll probably notice it a bit different from my colleagues', as I spent a good deal of time seeking out the handheld games instead of the more high-profile titles, and I have to say, I was surprised at what I saw. Where were all the PSP

games? Last year it was the darling of E3; this year, it seemed like an afterthought. Have the third parties already voted in the DS as the new successor to the handheld crown? With games like Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow (awesome, as expected), Viewtiful Joe, Sonic Rush, Trauma Center: Under the Knife and Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney, it may seem so, plus the first-party support was outstanding. Finally, New Super Mario Bros! Why has it taken Nintendo so long to deliver a brand-new 2D Mario adventure? Who cares? I'll take it! Regarding PSP, hopefully games like Dexter, Metal Gear Acid 2 and Street Fighter Alpha 3 will keep players busy until the rest of the line-up materializes. I think I'll pass on the GBA Micro though. That screen's just a bit too tiny for me.

While my overall view of E3 was that it was less exciting than previous years, one thing left me totally staggered—the crowds! This year's show was busier (and thus hotter and more smelly) than ever. And for those assclowns who have nothing better to do than gawk at girls and take pictures for their private collections...do they have to stop in the middle of a walkway when 600 people are trying to get by? I think next year, someone should organize an anti-gawking task force...although hopefully I'll be too busy with all the revolutionary new games to be aware of it.

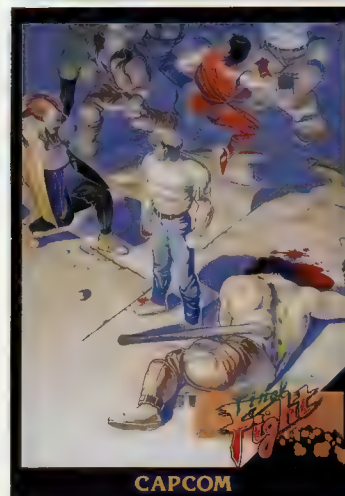
"If it weren't for the unveiling of the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and...the Nintendo Revolution, I probably could have slept through half the show..."

TOP 10 GAMES OF E3 2005

- 01 The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess GameCube Nintendo
- 02 Okami PlayStation 2 Capcom
- 03 Kameo: Elements of Power Xbox 360 Microsoft
- 04 Afterburner Next-gen console Sega
- 05 Sonic Next-gen console Sega
- 06 Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow Nintendo DS Konami
- 07 Kingdom Hearts II PlayStation 2 Square Enix
- 08 New Super Mario Bros. Nintendo DS Nintendo
- 09 Capcom Arcade Collection PlayStation 2, Xbox Capcom
- 10 Sonic Rush Nintendo DS Sega



The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess GC



CAPCOM



New Super Mario Bros. DS



Capcom Arcade Collection PS2, XB



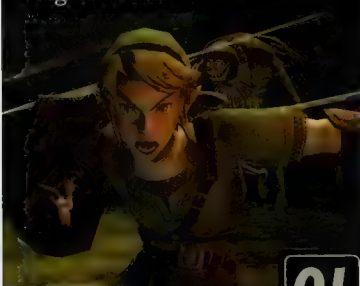
PERSONAL VIEW

Brady Fiechter



TOP 10 GAMES OF E3 2005

Of all the broad speculation and impetuous observations that E3 2005 brings to the table, the following top ten list deserves the most unqualified read. Most of these games come down to what I would enjoy having in my hands right now as much as the overt quality they exhibited on the show floor. These were the games that immediately grabbed my attention, mostly through what they seemed to represent visually and thematically, and most certainly many come with the benefit of rich heritage.

The Legend of Zelda
Twilight Princess

GameCube Nintendo

01

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess did not mesmerize me because it's another Zelda. It left its mark because of what it felt like to see its visions in motion, to feel the game come alive with a spirit of adventure and immersion that I didn't remotely feel with any other game I saw. There's too much of a disconnect from the experience of video games today; you can boil down all the facts and figures and polygon counts and gameplay mechanisms, but there is something that transcends the mechanical in a game like this, taking you into its world to become its fairy tale existence. Some games are as convincing as the reality of a dream, and Zelda: Twilight Princess is that strange dream that surrounds you the moment you lay eyes on it.

Shadow of the Colossus

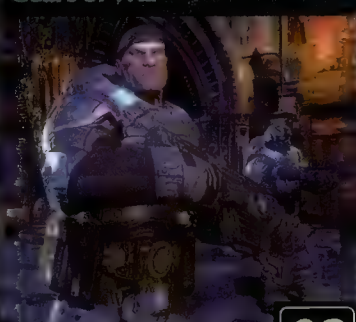


PlayStation 2 Sony

02

Shadow of the Colossus let me down big-time when I toiled around with it on the show floor. Glad I got to dig into it further for our cover story, revealing its magic as the music and atmosphere bloomed in a proper playing environment. Its ties to ICO are instantly recognizable, but to call it a sequel is misleading. This team comes from a different place in their approach to design, and it's beautiful in the purest sense that gamemaking can be right now.

Gears of War

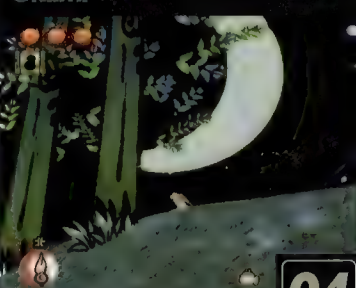


Xbox 360 Microsoft

03

Of all the real Xbox 360 games, Gears of War was really the only one that felt like I was looking at something strikingly advanced—something that will make you look at your new hardware and realize gamemaking has indeed reached the next plateau you might have envisioned. Beyond the intense presentation, the game just looked plain awesome to experience as a first-person shooter. The guys at Epic have always been at the forefront of new technology, but it's good to see them returning to single-player combat along with their advanced knowledge of coding.

Okami



PlayStation 2 Capcom

04

Why don't we get more games like this? Games with enchantment and grace? Games with a serene and fantastical artistry? Games that take us to a place that is nothing like our reality? Games that seem as attractive in their original design as their comfortable familiarity? Simply playing as a wolf is an interesting concept; guiding him through a world resembling moving silk-screen painting is even better; provide a truly innovative combat structure and you've got one of the best games of the show with confidence.

Castlevania: DoS

Nintendo DS Konami

05

Symphony of the Night will always be remembered as one of my favorites, and its spiritual successor, Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow on the GBA, did a wonderful job of following the Symphony aesthetic. It's no surprise that Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow grabbed me more than most games of the show, extending the Metroid-inspired heritage of those aforementioned greats onto the impressive 2D presentation of the DS. Obviously my love for the series plays deeply into my high anticipation for Dawn of Sorrow, and the game delivers in every important way.

King Kong



PS2, Xbox, GC, PC Ubisoft

06

Director Michele Ancel's past projects, Rayman and Beyond Good & Evil, have both landed near the top of my past best-of-the-year lists, so I have to give a little extra love to his latest out of anticipation as much as the outright impact the demo provided. The visuals crackle with the imagination fans have come to expect from Ancel's work, and the King Kong inspirations are, of course, a fantastic inspiration for a game. The game appears geared for a high-energy cinematic presentation.

Dragon Quest VIII



PlayStation 2 Square Enix

07

I know, I know, Dragon Warrior VII wasn't much to look at, and there were more than a few laborious stretches that only the heartiest fan would endure. But Dragon Quest VIII feels like a different monster, fed by lovely art, a gameplay system that pleasantly takes you back for total old-school RPG battles, and a traditional storytelling structure that relies on endless exploration through town and country. It's been too long since I've enjoyed a traditionally spun RPG tale—and yes, it's OK to work off a little nostalgia.

Kameo: Elements of Power



Xbox 360 Microsoft

08

It's pretty, it's filled with all sorts of neat gameplay devices, it's a Rare game long since in development, it's so pretty. And it's Xbox 360. I need a good genre game like Kameo, and there was nothing at the show of its type even close to offering this caliber of presentation, character and mechanics. I still feel like I don't know much about this adventurous game, but I've seen enough to be sold. The gradual improvements being made are making a huge difference...

Condemned: Criminal Origins



Xbox 360 Sega

09

I like dark games. I like evil in my games. I like urban decay. And I especially like an emphasis on storytelling. Condemned covers all my favorite bases, and, from a visual standpoint, struck me as the most interesting use of Xbox 360's new power next to Gears of War. That lighting is awesome, and the physics applied to nearly everything you see gives the gritty world an almost tactile creepiness.

Half-Life 2



Xbox VU Games

10

Here's another game that didn't necessarily have technology on its side, but no matter: the respect Half-Life 2 got on PC joined by my love for the genre is enough to get me pumped for its release. The more time I spent with the game, the more I saw the strengths to come. It's being developed in-house as well.

MISC E3 ACCOLADES

Because in a show this outrageously big, the accolades must flow



FAVORITE DESIGN OF THE NEW HARDWARE: **REVOLUTION**

THINGS WE NEED TO SEE MORE OF

And are actually seeing hints of coming true...

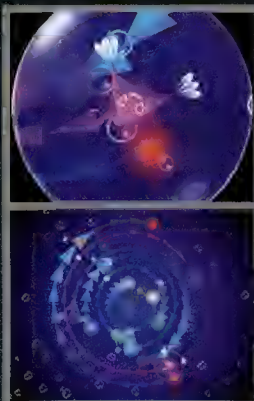
Soaring creativity the likes of Spore. How intriguing the proposition of an interactive model of evolution and the grand scope of creation. Will there be a hint of profundity found in this idea or more of an intriguing concept stuck in shackled execution?

Imagination and adventurous spirit the likes of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess and Shadow of the Colossus. The gamemakers behind these expected treasures seem to create from a different place.

Risks in theme. I don't need innovation as much as I need new ideas in presentation. Still give me a first-person shooter, but place it in a more interesting space, like Darkwatch.

Stories with some bite. Give it up to Alan Wake for climbing some interesting ground with its take on personal loss and psychosis.

Handheld games like Electropunkton, which aren't as much about traditional, conflict-driven gameplay as sensory bouts with interactive spaces.



BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: NOT ENOUGH HEAVY-HITTING PSP GAMES.

BIGGEST SURPRISE: DS REVEALS A ROBUST, INVENTIVE LINEUP FILLED WITH CLASSIC RE-TOOLINGS AND PLENTY OF ORIGINAL GAMES.

PLAYSTATION 3

MOST UNDERWHELMING DESIGN OF NEW HARDWARE, COMPLETE WITH OBNOXIOUS FONT: PS3

MOST WANTED SYSTEM BASED ON PURE SPECULATION: PS3



BEST GAME THAT WASN'T A GAME YET: KILLZONE

FAVORITE STATEMENT BY ME:

"Seriously, can we all just chill the f* out with this spec crap!?"**

PLEASANT SHOWING MAKING UP FOR LAST YEAR: SEGA

CURIOUSLY MISSING: PHANTOM





PERSPECTIVE

Big, bad, bold and ugly

What I'm certain of: Sony rocks, the PS3 is awesome and Sony sure does know how to rock. That's all that really needs to be said after you witness Killzone and Fight Night working in tandem to slay you. What, you don't like the look of that controller that returns to you when you throw it because it's so hot you can barely hold onto it? Please, that device and the fission factory it's hooked to is so sharp it'll cut your friends in half when they hold it in their grateful hands. Microsoft's games just weren't that good and they sure did offer up a weak press conference and a pathetic MTV special before that that made me not want to play the Xbox 1.5 360. Why no Perfect Dark Zero for that official E3 unveiling and no Perfect Dark Zero out in the open on the show floor? Clearly, Microsoft is scared of Sony and that's why they hire actors to whoop it up, and then they get all hyper and talk smack, like reaching one billion users. And Nintendo and their Revolution and all that... It's not even fully designed yet. What's that all about? Take off that R and add a capital D, what's that spell? De-evolution. The system looks like an old server locked away in my office closet, and it's only, like, four times as powerful as GameCube. It better be four times cheaper.

Ok, so I'm stopping now; you get the sarcastic point. Let's now rewind to a simpler time, where there were no blogs and inflamed forums and crazy speculations and people going out of their gourds trying to make sense of it all. It was about a decade ago, the first Electronic Entertainment Expo, and I remember walking up to the Saturn station, grabbing a pair of headphones, sinking into this strange new world known as Panzer Dragoon. The guy next to me couldn't stop smiling, reminding me of what I had just experienced playing Wipeout a few yards back in the modest PlayStation holding pen. It was a wonderful and exciting feeling, and a wonderful and exciting time for gaming. You felt something special, like the

industry was on the verge of something big.

Now we've gotten there, to that big place, and nobody seems to know how to handle it properly: giant crowds, giant bravado, giant misspent cash, giant manipulation of the easily manipulated. Three major consoles have been revealed in a multibillion-dollar storm of confusion. This E3 was maddening, an overly stuffed, hype-driven, tiring spectacle of mostly "whatever" games surrounded by "whatever" attitudes. The BS factor was so high at the Big Three press conferences, someone should have hired a sewage removal system to clean up afterwards.

But you know what? Come down from it all, just relax and take in what is indeed good, and there's some great stuff to get excited about. We're now swirling into the mainstream—perhaps not so much like we all anticipated—and with the mainstream comes the pandering-to-the-masses quotient that dilutes every popular entertainment from film to music. But in that same cauldron boils a much more robust brew; we're just in the stage of figuring out how to deal with the bigger kitchen. So let's all take a collective deep breath, cuz if one dominant thought came out of this year's show: the new potential for our lovely industry is out of this world.

Welcome PS3, Revolution and Xbox 360. The real winner in the end will of course be decided by you once all these games finally get the proper analysis. So take all this in with a grain of salt, and remember: the Revolution is the one you *really* want.

"Now we've gotten there, to that big place, and nobody seems to know how to handle it..."

OTHER FAVORITE OVERHEARD STATEMENT BY PROMINENT DEVELOPER:

"There really isn't any difference between PS3 and Xbox 360..."

FAVORITE OVERHEARD STATEMENT BY PROMINENT DEVELOPER:

"We're scared to death of the PS3..."

E3 PARTING REQUESTS

A call for a little more sanity...

Could someone please provide the distractingly endowed Miss Croft a proper breast reduction before Tomb Raider ships?



Would it be possible during next year's press conferences to place a disclaimer before every game demonstration that's a carefully manufactured pre-rendered tool of deception, clearly stating: This Game Is Not Running In Practical Real Time And Is Meant to Deceive You?

Any chance for next year's Nintendo conference of placing a false floor over a pit of spikes at the central entrance, set up to catch the throngs of mad frothing humanoids charging in for a seat as if their very existence depended on securing that dire seat?



OK, so having an actor's likeness in my game is one thing I'm just getting used to and soon to see increase exponentially, but perhaps we can stop there and ban all musicians/rappers from starring in their own virtual productions?

Can someone send me an email explaining what you plan to do with that picture you took with the booth babes, and if the developed results really do give you as much pleasure as they seemed to when being taken?

If you added up the number of booth babes, would they outnumber actual attendees, and is there someone out there who can provide me a spreadsheet that reveals just how many additional positive stories will be spawned by the presence of so much rented flesh?

So *Taxi Driver* and *The Godfather* go video game. What's next, *Apocalypse Now*: Up Your Arsenal?

Do we need over 1000 games in production at one time, or half that with more than five percent of substantial interest?

And finally, can we please not consider the new label for Nintendo—"niche player"—as a derisive attack?



PERSONAL VIEW

Greg Orlando



PERSPECTIVE

Somewhere beneath all the hype lie the games

Shane Kim, general manager for Microsoft Game Studios, is smiling. With a willing accomplice in tow, he's good naturedly performing his own unique version of Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" comedy routine. It is a red-letter day in the annals of surrealism.

"How do you define winning?" he's been asked. It's Microsoft's stated goal to "win" the upcoming console war with its yet-to-be-released Xbox 360, toppling both Nintendo's Revolution and Sony's PlayStation 3. Simple, Kim says: winning occurs when Microsoft comes in first place. And if you have to determine who's in first place, well, he says, you should look for the winner. The winner determined, of course, by a first-place finish.

I am Lou Costello to the video game industry's Bud Abbott at this year's E3, a determined bewilderment painted on my face. Xbox 360 will arrive this year with backward compatibility, only no one's saying just how this will work, or if it comes with any limitations. Sony's PlayStation 3 will have graphics so advanced they are capable of defeating either Satan or making it worth sitting through what seemed to be six hours' worth of pie charts and graphs at a press conference. But were the graphics shown representative of in-game artwork, or something the art team dollied up to show what PlayStation 3 could do if it was, say, the PlayStation 6? And the coming Revolution will be televised, Nintendo promised, but it's so far away its

pertinent details took a back seat to a man holding a small box that might accurately represent either the size of an upcoming game console or a small box. Who's on first? Exactly.

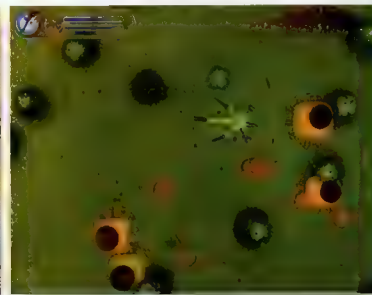
In this state of confusion, there was only one direction to turn: the games. Although E3 as a massive gathering does an excellent job of masking its true purpose by booming the music, presenting women of virtue indeterminate and vestments minimal, and shoe-horning the good, the bad and the unwashed into cramped quarters, quality does stand out. Zelda will be here soon, and there will be joy in the land. Will Wright has done it again with Spore. The oft-delayed StarCraft: Ghost is threatening to be good. Namco's stage of history and little ball-rolling man will turn this editor's coal-black and dead heart into a vibrant, thumping organ symbolic of man's love for all things electronic.

Forget the hype and play the games, E3 said this year. And it was, frankly, very good.

"Zelda will be here soon, and there will be joy in the land. Will Wright has done it again with Spore."



Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney DS



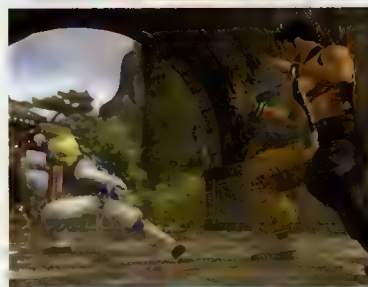
Spore PC

TOP 10 GAMES OF E3 2005

- 01 Spore PC Electronic Arts
- 02 The Movies PC Activision
- 03 Soul Calibur III PS2 Namco
- 04 Ultimate Spider-Man PS2, Xbox Activision
- 05 Gears of War Xbox 360 Microsoft
- 06 Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Nintendo DS Capcom
- 07 We Love Katamari PS2 Namco
- 08 King Kong PS2, Xbox, GC, PC Ubisoft
- 09 Dead or Alive 4 Xbox 360 Tecmo
- 10 Condemned Xbox 360 Sega



King Kong PS2, Xbox, GC, PC



Dead or Alive 4 Xbox 360



The Movies PC

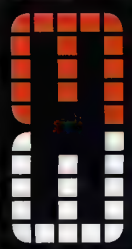
HONORABLE MENTIONS

Not Top 10, but close

SNOW 2K GAMES

BLACK ELECTRONIC ARTS

INFECTED MAJESCO



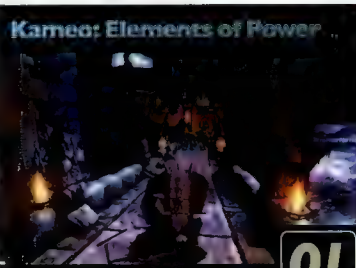
PERSONAL VIEW

Ashley Esqueda Associate Editor



TOP 10 GAMES OF E3 2005

From DS to 360, from returning classics to new concepts...



Xbox360 Microsoft

01

Hands down, Kameo blew me away this year. Nothing could describe the sheer awe I sat in as the Rare guys compared the Xbox version (80 percent complete before it moved to the 360) with the new version on Microsoft's next-gen 360. I never thought I'd say this, but it made the Xbox look blocky and sickly looking. Rare's long-awaited platformer looks beautiful, and it seems like they're finally able to do what they had originally imagined for the first incarnation of Kameo. Watching our heroine prance gracefully through an enchanted forest truly felt magical, and I also got massive goose bumps when I watched the infamous troll scene. Watching Kameo hurdle a horse through literally thousands of trolls was something I won't soon forget. This is the launch title that's going to sell the 360, no doubt about it.



Xbox360 Microsoft

03

I'm not much of a console-FPS kinda girl, which makes this pick a surprise, even for me. Then again, this game was *amazing*. It's the kind of beauty that makes you speechless. Gears of War looked incredible, and it was only running at about 30 percent of the 360's power: ...to which I don't know whether to be totally stoked or freakin' terrified about Microsoft's next-gen firepower. Keep your eyes on this one.



GameCube Nintendo

02

As I write this, I'm probably going to be the only person that didn't choose Zelda as my game of the show. That's not to say it wasn't breathtaking, however; the booth housing the playable parts of Zelda had a line longer (than the wait for the Red Sox to win the World Series (almost)). I never got into the Zelda series much as a kid, which probably contributes to my slightly-less-than-psychotic excitement about this game. It's gorgeous, and assuredly brilliant... there's no doubt it will be one of the best of 2005. Since everyone's eyes are already on Link, there's no need to elaborate. You know why it's here.



PlayStation 2 Square Enix

04

The first Kingdom Hearts stole my heart and everyone else's... KH II is no different; we already expect a sweet action-adventure game starring Sora, Donald, Goofy and the rest of the gang. Jack Sparrow's appearance was a very nice surprise, and I'm anxiously awaiting this superb-looking sequel.



Nintendo DS Konami

05

Someone pinch me, it's a sequel to Aria of Sorrow! More souls, more hot 2D side-scrolling action, and more Soma Cruz... a potent combination bound to stir up my inner-vampire. Seriously, it's a 2D Castlevania; need I say more?



Xbox Capcom

06

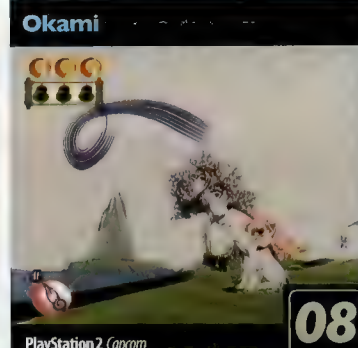
Anything having to do with vampires has my interest. The fact that Darkwatch looks really cool, plays even cooler, and has a naughty sex scene with bad-girl Tala only makes me even more interested.



PC LucasArts

07

If you like *Star Wars* like I do, and you think the best way to rid Tatooine of the Rebellion is blowing up the entire planet with the Death Star, then *Empire at War* is for you! Real-time strategy at its finest.



PlayStation 2 Capcom

08

I'm in love with this wonderfully innovative game... it looks like it's an entire Japanese watercolor. Fighting bosses with a calligraphy pen couldn't be more beautiful.



Nintendo DS Nintendo

09

Sure, Miyamoto has had some really weird ideas in the past... and we all became addicted to each one. This is the game everyone's going to have, but no one will admit except me.



PlayStation 2 Namco

10

Even more rolling up people, buildings, mountains, clouds and other objects. Add a really cool co-op mode and this is one Katamari you don't want passing you by!

ASHLEY'S 13 ACCOLADES



GAME YOU'LL NEVER HEAR ABOUT THAT YOU SHOULD: TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE

Nintendo DS Atlus



BEST BOOTH GIRLS: AS ALWAYS, NINTENDO

COOLEST BOOTH: ROCKSTAR

WORST BOOTH: ELECTRONIC ARTS

Once you got in, you never got out.



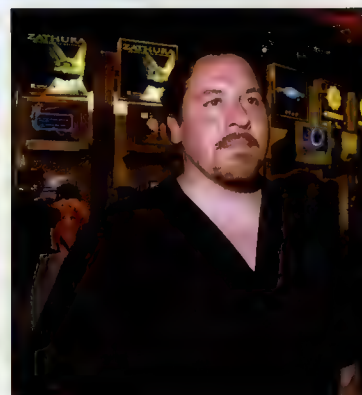
MOST WANTED: FOR THE FFVII TECH DEMO TO BECOME A REAL MMAXH!

Come on, Square Enix!



GAME THAT MADE ME LOSE HOPE IN HUMANITY: 50 CENT: BULLETPROOF

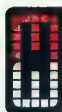
GAME THAT RESTORED MY HOPE IN HUMANITY: SONIC NEXT-GEN



MOST THOUGHT-PROVOKING INTERVIEW: JON FAVREAU

CREEPIEST PROMO: MAJESCO'S MAKEUP ARTISTS MAKING PEOPLE LOOK "INFECTED"





PERSPECTIVE VIEW

Golden Perspective



GUILTY PLEASURE: THE WARRIORS (ROCKSTAR GAMES)

PERSPECTIVE

Well folks, this year's E3 has come and gone, and I'm feeling giddy, miserable, anxious and befuddled all at once. This mixture of emotion comes and goes every year, yet I come back and subject myself to the insanity of E3 time after time.

First off, I'm going to rant a bit about the show itself. Where did all these people come from? I know they don't all work in the industry, especially the media. I stood in the media registration line for an hour, and moved a sickeningly grand total of 15 feet. Who are you mystery media people? I completely apologize if you're reading this and you had legit creds...but if you were in that line and wasted everyone's time by trying to sneak in as media, please do me a favor, and just go as floor-only next year.

Now, I bet you're reading this and thinking, "Geez Ashley, don't be so elitist!" To that, all I can tell you is that when it's hotter than the ninth circle of Hell outside, you have an interview in 15 minutes, and there's a mysterious stench wafting over the crowd, you'd feel the same way. In addition to that, it seemed like every single person on the planet that had ever played a video game was at the convention this year. There was no comparison to last year—the big guns and their new consoles brought out the masses, no doubt. I don't know if I'm going to have the same perspective on the consoles as everyone else, but here's my take:

Microsoft put together a really great booth this year. I was impressed how they were able to handle hordes of foot traffic and still maintain the balance between the press and the attendees. The 360 looks exciting; Kameo was my game of the show, and I stand by that statement. Gears of War also looked absolutely jaw-dropping...the Rare folks have really outdone themselves. Let's hope that they'll start cranking out titles faster than one every five years! I think that Microsoft has an interesting concept with taking Live to

the next level...however, I can't imagine too many people really getting into the intricacies of the Live system. Microsoft claims they will reach one billion people with the advent of the 360...which seems a tad high considering what direction they're going in with their new console. To me, it seemed as if they want to capture the casual gamer but focused more on the hardcore set. The content looks great, but for a console coming out in less than six months...let's just say that I hope they give me more launch titles. Another issue I have is the whole "limited backwards compatibility," which means games like Halo will be backwards compatible, but not a masterpiece like Psychonauts or Oddworld. It makes me sad to think someone's making that decision, but I guess I'll learn to live with it...I just wasn't expecting to move onto a new, non-compatible next-gen console so soon.

Sony's PS3 didn't disappoint, and everyone knows that. However, I'm still having reservations about it. Yes, the tech demo for FFVII looked spectacular (and almost made me break out into seizures of joy), but at what point must we take a step back and say, "OK, that's brilliant, but show me some games with someone maneuvering a character with a controller!" The demo was impressive, but I'll hold off on the bandwagon until I see it in action with my own two eyes. The console is coming out next spring, and I can't help but be almost positive that they wouldn't come to this year's E3 with no playable content if they planned on launching the PS3 before next year's E3. So I'm guessing that by "Spring 2006," Sony means "the last day of Spring, 2006," meaning "probably mid-late June of 2006." So I'll be keeping my eye on the PS3 (anyone else notice the logo looks awfully Spider-Man-ish?)

Nintendo...ah Nintendo. They brought the fire this year. They blazed past the PSP (something I didn't think was possible)

NEATEST SWAG: "DESTROYED BEAUTY"

The concept art book for Gears of War

LONGEST LINE: MEDIA REGISTRATION

(HA! YOU THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO SAY ZELDA!)

BEST WAY TO PLAY: SHINY'S "JACK-IN" CHAIR FOR THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

AN ACTUAL JACK-IN CHAIR FROM THE FILM

BEST PRESS TREATMENT: MICROSOFT (SEPARATE MEDIA SECTIONS FOR THE WIN)



HOTTEST BOOTH GIRLS: THE ASSASSIN'S OVER AT SQUARE ENIX

"There was no comparison to last year...new consoles brought out the masses, no doubt."

with their new titles at E3. Castlevania DS, Nintendogs, Trauma Center, Mario Kart, Viewtiful Joe...need I go on? The N proved they're not messing around. The Game Boy Micro is totally sexy, and I haven't seen one game for the Revolution, but I'm sure as hell ready to. The backwards compatibility alone has me aching for a Revolution already! I think Nintendo got it right this year—there's a point where us as a gaming community will expect great graphics as the norm, and we'll go back to yearning for really awesome content in games. We can't let a game with a beautiful shell hold us over much longer. We're going to need games with heart and soul. That's where Nintendo has always shined, and I don't

see it stopping anytime soon. Again, like the PS3, I'm holding out on my final verdict, but I'm more excited about the Revolution than the other two next-gen machines. Hey, even if the games are terrible (which I highly, highly doubt,) you'll still be able to play the classics.

And there it is: my two cents, for what it's worth. I may be the strange one in the bunch here at Play (at least Dave thinks I'm a weirdo for choosing Nintendogs in my top 10!) but I try to have my own little niche here. E3 was a plethora of excitement, and I'm sure it won't change next year...although I'll admit I'm hoping for a shorter line next year for media registration...and invites to the über-cool parties.

A Fascinating Alchemic Adventure **RPG!**



PlayStation 2

ATELIER IRIS

ETERNAL MANA

The Art of Alchemy Can be so Deadly!

In an age of peace and harmony, the power of evil is lurking in the shadows. The progeny of the dying art of alchemy must rise to defend all that there is. Together with the forces of Mana, an alliance of fate must decide the destiny of the entire world.

Go wild on your alchemy experiments!!

Over 400 random events!

Over 300 creatable items!!

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TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Fantasy Violence
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol and Tobacco



E3 2005 Top 10

As voted on by the Play editorial staff

The Legend of Zelda

Twilight Princess

GameCube Nintendo

01

At last year's E3, when the yet-to-be-titled new Zelda game was shown, it was almost unanimously voted game of the show. Though only demonstrated on video, not shown in playable form, the amazing graphics, more mature themes and pervasive edge of darkness won over series fans and jaded editors alike. Now, a year later, the game has a complete name, a new twist, and was available in playable form. Guess what? It's still at the top of our list.

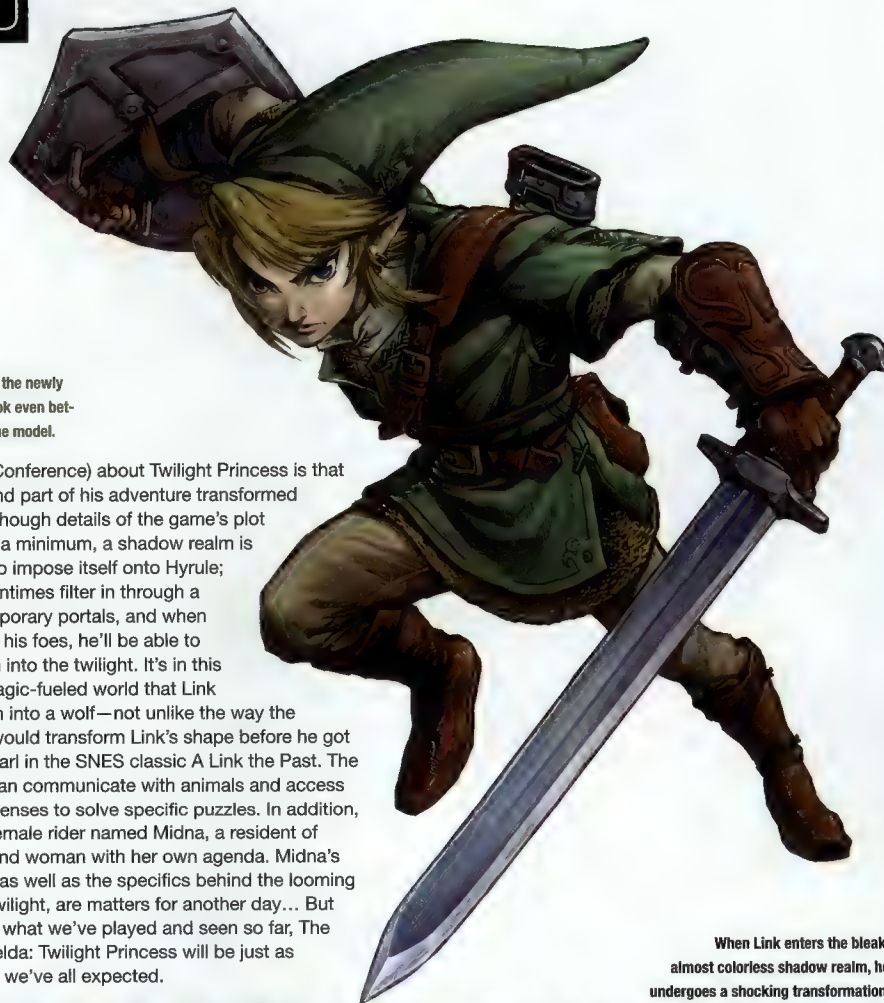
For those who missed it last year, the new Zelda stars a more realistic-looking Link, one who begins his adventure as a ranch hand of sorts, herding goats and whooping it up (literally—pressing the GameCube controller's A button made the protagonist let out a shrill “Yee-hah!”) before a pressing darkness and the threat of a shattered Hyrule force our hero into service as savior of the land.

Several game areas were available for play at E3, the most striking—and fun—of which featured Link racing across the Hyrule plain on a horse, battling a series of boar riders who've kidnapped a small child, culminating in a dramatic joust on a stone bridge as the setting sun painted the scene with blood-red hues. Amid the fight, Nintendo has added a genuine bit of horror: the boy is lashed to a pole on the lead rider's boar, and the message was made very clear. This is by no means Nintendo's second take on the cel-shaded *Wind Waker*.

Other playable scenes were more traditional. In one dungeon-themed boss battle, Link used his new Gale Boomerang to assault what looked like a highly animated version of Audrey II from the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*. Here, Link must use the boomerang to knock a bomb from a monkey's hand and guided it to explode against his tentacled foe. With the plant suitably stricken, Link could strike at its exposed tongue, repeat, and win the day.

Of course, the big surprise (or not, depending on if you got the hint Nintendo dropped at March's Game

“...enemies oftentimes filter in through a series of temporary portals, and when Link masters his foes, he'll be able to pass through into the twilight.”

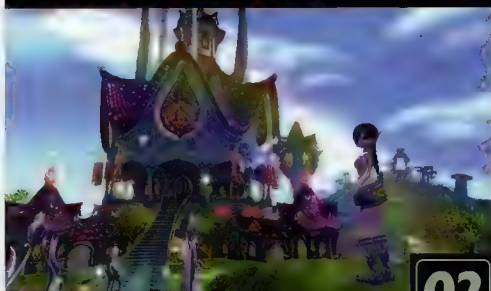


All the details on the newly designed Link look even better on the in-game model.

Developers Conference) about *Twilight Princess* is that Link will spend part of his adventure transformed into a wolf. Though details of the game's plot were kept to a minimum, a shadow realm is threatening to impose itself onto Hyrule; enemies oftentimes filter in through a series of temporary portals, and when Link masters his foes, he'll be able to pass through into the twilight. It's in this bleak and magic-fueled world that Link will transform into a wolf—not unlike the way the *Dark World* would transform Link's shape before he got the Moon Pearl in the SNES classic *A Link the Past*. The lupine Link can communicate with animals and access heightened senses to solve specific puzzles. In addition, he'll gain a female rider named Midna, a resident of the twilight and woman with her own agenda. Midna's motivations, as well as the specifics behind the looming peril of the twilight, are matters for another day... But judging from what we've played and seen so far, The Legend of Zelda: *Twilight Princess* will be just as legendary as we've all expected.

When Link enters the bleak, almost colorless shadow realm, he undergoes a shocking transformation.



Kameo: Elements of Power

Xbox 360 Microsoft

The increase in visual integrity over the (canceled) Xbox version of Kameo is truly amazing. Nothing like a Rare fantasy adventure to get us excited about the 360.

02

Gears of War

Xbox 360 Microsoft

The single most technologically advanced playable game at E3 had a bad attitude, truly inspired commando-style gameplay and a frightening adversary.

03

Kingdom Hearts II

PlayStation 2 Square Enix

The big E3 revelation: one of the new realms Sora and company will travel to will be based on Pirates of the Caribbean, featuring nearly photorealistic graphics!

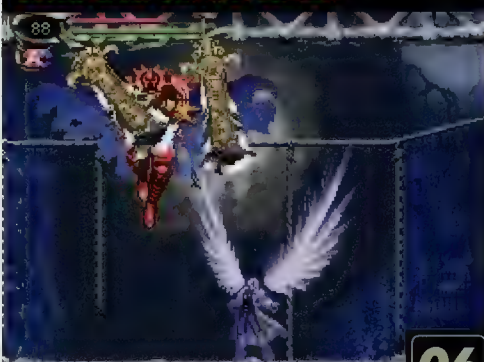
04

Okami

PlayStation 2 Capcom

A unique lead character (a wolf), a unique gameplay mechanic (a magic calligraphy brush), a unique look, a unique theme... Okami was unlike anything else shown at E3.

05

Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow

Nintendo DS Konami

As the spiritual successor to Symphony of the Night, Dawn of Sorrow is easily the most anticipated Nintendo DS game. It looks gorgeous and the gameplay is perfectly honed. Another 2D masterpiece in the making.

06

King Kong

PS2, Xbox, GC, PC Ubisoft

A free-form cinematic adventure like nothing you've ever experienced—visceral, adrenaline-charged and ever-evolving—from the genius of Peter Jackson and Michel Ancel.

07

Darkwatch

PS2, Xbox Capcom

High Moon respects the art of the game, apparent in every facet of their debut title, Darkwatch, a vampire/western FPS adventure with an eye on tactics.

08

Spore

PC Electronic Arts

Go from amoeba to life form to tribe to colony to empire to planetary rule and then all the way to the galaxy. The universe is the limit...if there is one.

09

Shadow of the Colossus

PlayStation 2 Sony

The crowded, hot, noisy corridors of E3 aren't the best place to experience the majesty of a subtle game like Shadow of the Colossus, but its unique brilliance sparkled nonetheless.

10



TOP 10 HANDHELD GAMES

The image shows the title screen and a game scene for Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow. The title screen at the top features the game's title "Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow" in a stylized font. Below the title is a portrait of Soma Cruz with his stats: "SOMA LV.25", "ATT DEF STR CON INT LCK", "POISON RESISTANCE", "NEXT 8150", "GOLD 0", and "BULLET GUARDIAN ENCHANTED". Below the stats is a row of enemy icons and the text "WARG". The game scene below shows Soma Cruz in a dark, gothic environment with stone walls and a large, ornate carriage. A health bar at the top left of the scene shows "408". The bottom of the image features the "Nintendo DS Konami" logo and a large "01" in the bottom right corner.

MediEvil: Resurrection

06

PSP Sony



Daxter

PSP Sony

08

Daxter's solo adventure explains what he was up to at all that time while Jak was imprisoned prior to Jak II. Turns out it was lot of platforming, pouncing on enemies and exterminating evil vermin. The visuals are extremely impressive.

048 July 2005

ALSO NOTICE

The rest of the best of E3 handhelds

Many new, innovative handheld titles, along with new versions of returning favorites, were to be found at this year's show. These games didn't quite make our Top 10, but they wowed us nonetheless.

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney



Press



Nintendo DS Capcom

Essentially a graphic-text adventure that requires you to solve mysteries to prove your clients' innocence, Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney delivers exciting anime-style presentation and dynamic storytelling for a uniquely promising DS experience.

Trace Memory



No one's come by this place



Nintendo DS Nintendo

Following in the tradition of Myst, Trace Memory is a graphic adventure set on a mysterious island in which players will have to explore their surroundings (by tapping areas on the touchscreen map) to unravel the disappearance of the heroine's parents.

Trauma Center: Under the Knife



先生の前で、拍動下での処置は...
...危険かもしれません。



Nintendo DS Atlus

In Trauma Center, you play a young surgeon, using the DS' touchscreen to operate on patients—curing infections, stitching up wounds, removing tumors, bandaging injuries and more. Innovation like this fits perfectly on DS, and it's backed by strong storytelling.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 3



Nintendo DS Konami

TMNT3 improves upon the formula by offering sprawling levels featuring plenty of exploration mixed in with the fighting, along with the ability to summon teammates at certain times, like calling upon Mikey's hover ability to clear a dangerous pit.

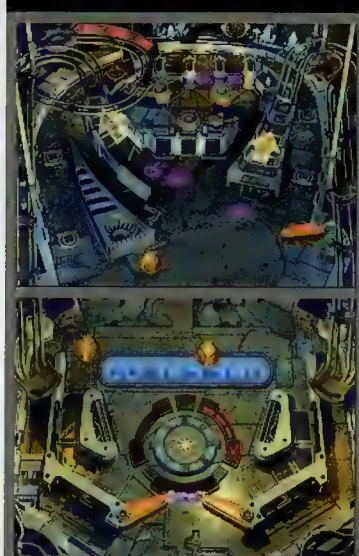
Guilty Gear: Dust Strikers



Nintendo DS Majesco

Not unlike Guilty Gear Isuka, Dust Strikers is crazy fighting mayhem for four players simultaneously, the difference being multi-tiered vertical battlefields and traps littered throughout. Twenty-one famous Guilty Gear fighters will be selectable.

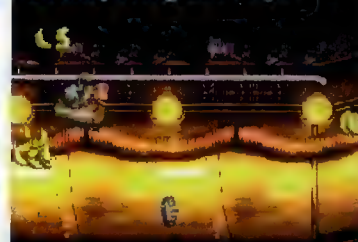
Metroid Prime Pinball



Nintendo DS Nintendo

Although the gameplay of Metroid Prime Pinball didn't seem particularly mind-blowing at E3, the DS' two screens certainly seem ideal for pinball, and the thought of defeating enemies, including bosses, by using Samus as the ball is definitely appealing.

Donkey Kong Country 3



Game Boy Advance Nintendo

Completing the trilogy, the final chapter in the Donkey Kong Country saga is heading to the GBA this fall. Dixie Kong and newcomer Kiddy Kong will have to tag-team through more than 40 levels of pattern-intense platforming and slick pre-rendered visuals.

Guilty Gear: Judgment



PSP Majesco

In addition to awesome 2D one-on-one fighting action, Guilty Gear Judgment features a new side-scrolling beat-'em-up Boost mode. Choose from 20 characters, battle enemy legions throughout 19 stages, even team up with a friend for some wireless co-op.

F1 Grand Prix



PSP Sony

Officially licensed and boasting all of the real tracks and teams of F1 racing, F1 Grand Prix features seven modes of play, including championship mode and wireless play for up to eight players. Users can even upload their own tunes from their memory sticks.

Shaman King: Master of Spirits 2



Game Boy Advance Konami

The first Shaman King: Master of Spirits was one of last year's best handheld games thanks to its Castlevania-like gameplay, and this sequel continues that tradition, with plenty of vanquished spirits to collect and grant Yoh new abilities.



PC REPORT

With mouse and keyboard they will come.

E3 2005 PC REPORT

Words Mike Griffin

It was transition time again at this year's E3: every next generation console was revealed, and after the impressive and sometimes unbelievable—ie, Killzone 2—demos, PC gaming was suddenly looking a little underpowered. Unlike previous console transitions, the feature set of these next-gen giants isn't just about clock speed inflations and audio/visual power-ups. The new systems, all vastly complex and multi-core, will also include many of the features and connectivity options that, up till now, have been exclusive to the PC. So the fine line of capability between console and PC is fading, and the Xbox 360 is going to start chipping away at that divide in about five months—packing the gaming muscle of a very powerful PC. Despite serious next-gen console agendas, major publishers like Sega, Namco and Take 2 made it adamantly clear that they are fully committed to PC projects. After the huge global sales of Half-Life 2, World of Warcraft and most recently Guild Wars, the PC is clearly seen as a profitable medium offering experiences that consoles—current or next-gen—are still unable to provide. And as developers run into the learning curve of next-gen hardware, the PC ploughs ahead with mature, stunning Dx9 engines (see: F.E.A.R.) that look every bit as potent as any next-gen title set for release this year. It's also business as usual for Intel, AMD, Nvidia and ATI, as each company rolls out newer, more powerful PC hardware. At this rate, the technical superiority of next-gen consoles will probably evaporate before year's end. Of course, when one of the key next-gen players also happens to produce the most widely used operating system on the planet, the PC's continued presence as an elite gaming platform is all but assured.



BIGGEST SURPRISE

Tabula Rasa's new direction

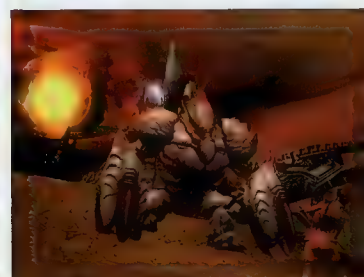
OK, so it isn't a killer sequel and it wasn't the most visually striking PC game at the show (though it *does* look great), but NCsoft's Tabula Rasa packed some shock value as it resurfaced after six months of obscurity looking like a brand new game. Executive producer and industry vet Richard Garriott explained how the original direction for Tabula Rasa's MMO design—from gameplay to art style—was a bit too “soft” for the team's liking. The revamped TR features intense and constantly evolving battlefields with fast action, huge effects and screen-

quaking explosions. Enemies have a darker techno-organic aesthetic now and high-impact animation. The RPG character/stat depth is still prevalent and the huge array of collectible gear and vehicles has been retained, but there's a fresh FPS action vibe with NPC squad movement, control point objectives and event-driven pacing. Anything that could potentially drag down the flow of frontline combat and base infiltration has been carefully streamlined, and you'll even have optional character save points to revert to should you decide to pursue a different specialization. Tabula Rasa is wrapped up in an intriguing storyline featuring the Bane, a xenophobic alien race that opposed their ancestors' charitable relationship (sharing knowledge and technology) with other intelligent life. Now the Bane plan to conquer and enslave these favored beings to suppress their advancement, and only a ragtag force of human rebels stands in their way.

Tabula Rasa NCsoft February 2006



Executive producer Richard Garriott



TOP 10 PERSISTENT ONLINE

- 01 City of Villains *NCsoft*
- 02 Gunstar Super Heroes *Funcom*
- 03 Age of Conan *NCsoft*
- 04 Auto Assault *NCsoft*
- 05 Imperator *Mythic*
- 06 D&D Online *Turbine*
- 07 Vanguard Heroes *Sigil*
- 08 Lord of the Rings Online *Turbine*
- 09 Dark and Light *Farlan*
- 10 SUN *Webzen*

GENRE HIGHLIGHTS

Massively Multiplayer Online



City of Villains *NCsoft* October 2005

City of Villains turned heads at E3 with its superb CG cinematics and new instanced environments filled with Agelia-powered particle physics. As City of Heroes' first official expansion pack, CoV will launch your nefarious career across the Rogue Isles with a range of new powers. CoV will also introduce customized base building, and if our demo with celebrated designer Dave "Zeb" Cook was any indication, the system looks to be as painstakingly detailed as CoH's amazing character creation. These superstructures will house artifacts that grant bonuses to the resident team, and opposing player factions will attempt to pry the artifact loose during large-scale PvP base raids. If solo play is more your style, you can fight through dozens of missions to raise your status within the Isles' criminal hierarchy.



Auto Assault



D & D Online



SUN

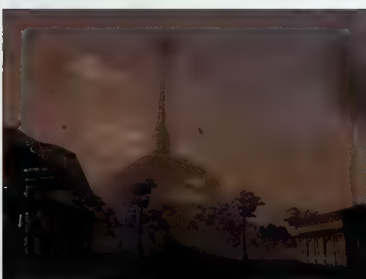


Vanguard Heroes



Age of Conan *Funcom* 1st half 2006

Funcom's Age of Conan looked pretty amazing. First off, the game begins with a deep 20-hour single-player campaign penned by the writing team responsible for The Longest Journey. You're a savage of sorts in a barbaric pseudo-civilization under Conan's reign. He is a good and strong leader, driving his enemies before him, but there are ancient evils surfacing all across Hyboria. After you've made two critical class decisions during the self-contained single-player game, you may continue with your character in a full massively multiplayer online action-RPG experience with guilds, castle sieges, more skills, levels and persistent progression. Funcom is crafting a world of extremely detailed and organic environments using a visibly powerful next-gen engine.

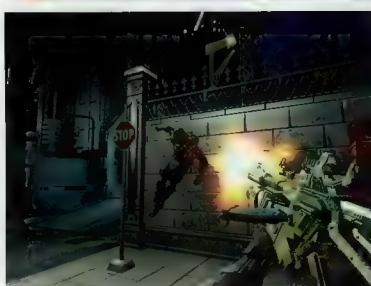


Imperator *Mythic Entertainment* 1st half 2006

Dark Age of Camelot developer Mythic Entertainment showcased Imperator, its forthcoming sci-fi MMO. The plot involves a highly original alternate history scenario where the Roman republic narrowly avoids its own downfall and goes on to lead humanity into a prosperous future and early space age. One of history's other great cultures, the Mayans, has also persisted—becoming the reviled foe of the Romans. After running through several of the early missions hands-on as an elite Roman Virtori, we were left with a positive impression of Imperator. The world design is totally unique and the combat, control and quest interface feel like something you could sink into for hours at a time.

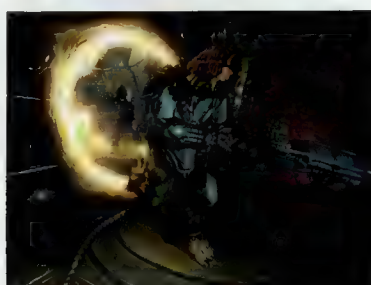
TOP 10 ACTION/FPS

- 01 Huxley Webzen
- 02 Prey 2K Games
- 03 F.E.A.R. VU Games
- 04 Serious Sam 2 2K Games
- 05 Quake IV Activision
- 06 Unreal Tournament 2007 Midway
- 07 Battlefield 2 EA Games
- 08 TimeShift Turbine
- 09 Call of Duty 2 Atari
- 10 Exteel NCsoft



TimeShift Atari October 2005

After the Unreal publishing deal expired, Atari needed a new hit FPS franchise, and TimeShift is the hopeful candidate. The Saber engine handles all the latest tech, but it's TimeShift's fantastic use of time manipulation—promoting creative gameplay—that sets it apart from the crowd.



Prey 2K Games 2006

3D Realms' resurrected shooter, now helmed by Human Head Studios, was one of E3's best-looking titles. Powered by Doom 3 technology, Prey showcases wildly imaginative creature designs and portal-based gameplay coated in sumptuously shaded chrome, bone and mutant flesh.

TOP 10 RPG/RTS

- 01 Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion 2K Games
- 02 Spore EA Games
- 03 Hellgate Namco
- 04 Black & White 2 EA Games
- 05 Company of Heroes THQ
- 06 Rise of Legends Microsoft
- 07 Age of Empires 3 Microsoft
- 08 Fable: The Lost Chapters Microsoft
- 09 Dreamfall Funcom
- 10 Call of Cthulu 2K Games

GENRE HIGHLIGHTS

First-Person Shooter

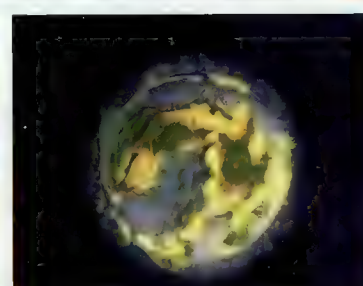


Huxley Webzen Q3 2006

The screenshots and movies were incredible, but finally seeing Huxley behind closed doors, running in real time, confirmed that this game is, in fact, hardcore. Featuring some of the most amazing models and character animation in an FPS to date, ridiculously detailed and stylized sci-fi renaissance-baroque environments and awesome vehicle and gun design, Huxley is radiating potential. Some of the most exciting game development is coming out of Korea right now, and Webzen's new internal studios—including Huxley's H-Studio team—are reputed to be staffed with a few of the hottest rising stars in the industry. Their mastery of the Unreal Engine 3 in Huxley—tweaking it for a massive online FPS cityscape—would seem to confirm the existence of major talent at Webzen.

GENRE HIGHLIGHTS

Hybrid Strategy



Spore EA Games 2006

When Will Wright introduces a new game concept, people pay attention. The creator of The Sims tends to have a few bright ideas. In Spore, players will start off as microorganisms pulsing about in a vast primordial puddle. You'll ascend through complex layers of evolution using a universal editing system, swapping out fins for feet, leaf huts for brick walls, and spears for lasers. Now here's the really cool part: a copy of any unique new creation you design will be uploaded to a universal server. Whenever another Spore player needs a particular type of creature or object to balance out his or her current ecosystem and society, a suitable player-created hybrid will be downloaded. You will eventually rise to an inter-stellar scale and visit other players' developing planets (again, downloaded) to sample their creations directly. It's sort of like an ever-evolving massively multiplayer god game, minus the persistent online state. Brilliant.



PREVIEW

Final Fight: Streetwise

PlayStation 2, Xbox

Final Fight is back, but it's not quite the Final Fight we knew. It's a grittier, more realistic, more violent Metro City; in place of roasts in barrels you've got four-letter words. The game is still all about beating up punks though, which hero Kyle does a lot of when his brother, Final Fight veteran Cody, gets kidnapped. Surprisingly, it's just single-player. **CH**

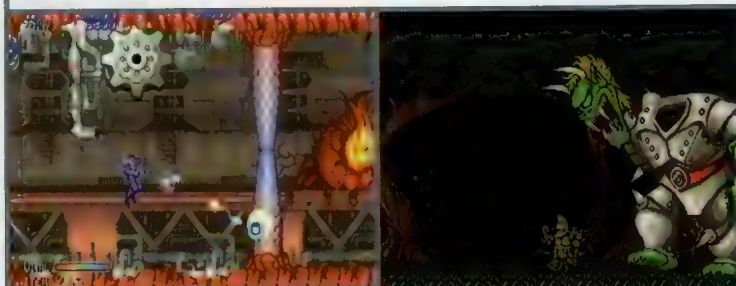


Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: Winter

Capcom Classics Collection

PlayStation 2, Xbox

It's crazy how old-school Capcom games are more appealing than half of the new stuff that's out there today, but that's only a testament to the games' appeal. Twenty-two classics are included here: Street Fighter II, Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Forgotten Worlds, Final Fight, Bionic Commando, 1942, Mercs, Trojan and more, all in arcade-perfect form—bonus content generously included. **CH**



Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: September

Super Mario Strikers

GameCube

Mario has branched out into almost every other sport out there; why not soccer too? Of course, it's soccer with a Mario twist, with favorite Mario characters (teams consist of Koopas and mushroom people) and power-ups like turtle shells to take out your foes. With a strong sports pedigree from the developer, it should be a great soccer experience too. **CH**



Developer: Next Level Games Publisher: Nintendo Available: TBA

Front Mission Online

PlayStation 2, PC

Players have been enjoying piloting giant "wanzer" mechs for years, but the experience will be totally new when it goes online—the Front Mission series is switching from turn-based strategy to real-time combat. All the series mainstays will still be included, such as extensive mech customization, substantial story elements and experience-based character growth. **CH**



Developer: Square Enix Publisher: Square Enix Available: TBA

Dead Rising

Xbox 360

The latest game from Keiji Inafune (Onimusha, Mega Man) is another zombie game... but this ain't no Resident Evil. Dead Rising is an all-out action experience, using the 360's power to put literal mobs of enemies on-screen at once. You'll have to grab anything you can find—a broom, a potted plant, another enemy—to use as a weapon and make the undead dead once again. **CH**



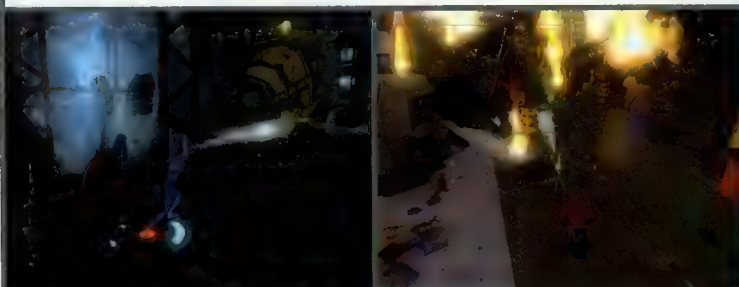
Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom Available: TBA



The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

Ah, the annual Heavy Iron game! In the impressive-looking *Rise of the Underminer*, which picks up just where the movie left off, Mr. Incredible and Frozone team up to save Metroville, journeying into vast underground worlds for some seriously cool co-op play. **DH**



Developer: Heavy Iron Publisher: THQ Available: Fall

Scooby Doo! Unmasked

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

Following in the pawsteps of the puzzle-laden *Mystery Mayhem*, with *Unmasked*—starring Adam West (TV's Batman) and other choice vocal talent—THQ takes Scooby and company back where they belong—to the platforming antics of *Night of 100 Frights*—while sticking to the movie-set guise...only this time Scooby literally gets into the act. **DH**

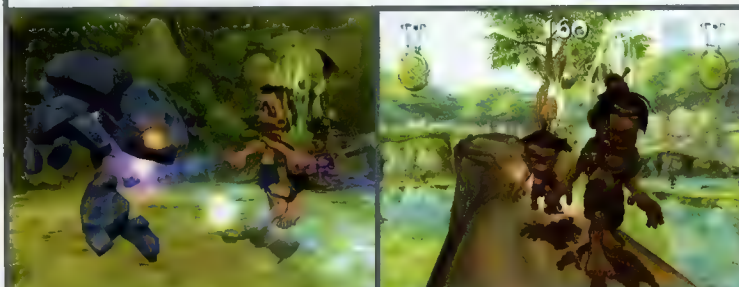


Developer: AZM Publisher: THQ Available: Fall

Tak: The Great Juju Challenge

PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube

Representing the Pupanunu tribe in the Great Juju Challenge, Tak and Loc team up for some seriously creative co-op racing action, fortified with time-based strategy, puzzles, platforming and combat. Look for all-new animal disguises (as well as shaman upgrades) including a lobster suit for Loc and the return of Tak's chicken suit! **DH**



Developer: Avalanche Software Publisher: THQ Available: Fall

Painkiller

Xbox

People Can Fly has completed a remarkable Xbox port of their PAIN engine, and *Painkiller* is reaping the benefits. This version can be considered the *Painkiller* ultra-mix, as PCF rips all the best levels from the PC original and the *Battle Out of Hell* expansion, as well as all the finest multiplayer levels, combining them into one sweet package for Xbox owners. **MG**



Developer: People Can Fly Publisher: DreamCatcher Available: November

Neopets: The Darkest Faerie

PlayStation 2

Based on the ever-burgeoning Neopets craze, SCEA's hidden gem at E3 may look like the latest Pokémon-type critter farm, but (thankfully) it's actually a vast quest-based adventure that has you switching between knight and sorceress (Tor and Roberta) protecting Neopia from, you guessed it, *The Darkest Faerie*, awakened and quite irritated after a millennium of deep freeze. **DH**



Developer: Idol Minds Publisher: Sony Available: August



Black

PlayStation 2, Xbox

Criterion's highly stylized first-person shooter/Hollywood-style action epic—shown behind closed doors—casts players as an unstoppable, unaccountable and untraceable covert operative fighting a perilous overt war against terror in Eastern Europe. **DH**



Developer: Criterion Software Ltd. Publisher: Electronic Arts Available: TBA

One Piece: Grand Battle

PlayStation 2, GameCube

Based on Bandai's Saturday morning anime, if you were looking for a fight at E3, this was a great place to be. One Piece looks like all that and a gold plated peg leg hearties, with seven huge interactive environments and 20-plus moves for all 16 characters. Move way over, Powerstone. **DH**



Developer: Ganbarion Publisher: Bandai Available: September

The Legend of Kay

PlayStation 2

I've had an eye on The Legend of Kay for a while now, hoping a U.S. publisher might snap it up, but I never imagined it would be Capcom. It's no Maximo, but a fun, if not kooky, platformer stocked with talking rabbits, rats and a frisky samurai cat. **DH**



Developer: Neon Studios Publisher: Capcom Available: September

Evil Dead: Regeneration

PlayStation 2, Xbox

It looks as if we may finally be getting an Evil Dead game worthy of a blue light special. In this spiritual successor to ED2, Ash has been forced to take on a partner: a three-foot tall Deadite who's part empath, part wiseass and all crazy corpse in the ultimate over-the-top all-out bloodbath. **DH**



Developer: Cranky Pants Publisher: THQ Available: Fall



INTERVIEW

HIDEO KOJIMA Head of Kojima Productions for Konami

The next generation of Hideo games

METAL GEAR

HIDEO KOJIMA Head of Kojima Productions for Konami

Interview by Chris Hoffman

Metal Gear is all about stealth and staying hidden, but the critically acclaimed series was directly in the spotlight in the days leading up to this year's E3. Metal Gear mastermind Hideo Kojima—now heading up a studio within Konami appropriately called Kojima Productions—revealed that his team is working on no fewer than three Metal Gear games: Metal Gear Ac!d 2 on PSP, Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence (an enhanced, online-enabled MGS3) for PS2 and Metal Gear Solid 4 for PS3. Unfortunately, no MGS4 game footage was shown, but an amusing teaser made with the MGS3 engine (in which Solid Snake lost a game of musical chairs to enemy soldiers, prompting him to kill them all, then beat the crap out of MGS2 girly-man Raiden) revealed that Kojima will be remaining

on as the game's designer, producer and director, and also that Solid Snake will again be the star. The MGS4 story takes place in the near future, following the plot from MGS2, with characters like Meryl and Otacon returning for the adventure.



play: Thank you for staying on as the director/designer/producer of Metal Gear Solid. Why the change of heart? Hideo Kojima: Back in March, for the European press conference—there was a small press conference—I announced that I was going to do the game design and produce, and leave the other details to the younger staff, and after that, I received many emails and letters and everything saying “we want Kojima to do everything as you have been doing before.” So that’s why I changed my mind... And you know, I was really surprised at the feedback after that European press thing. Everyone was confused, even the staff. I received mails and callings from my own staff as well. That’s why I thought, “OK, I’ll do everything like a comeback.”

Previously, you’d indicated that you wanted to do something other than Metal Gear. Do you still want to do something different, or will Metal Gear be your focus for a while?

Well, [my] first priority is to get Metal Gear Solid 4 rolling. So once it gets rolled, I have other new ideas I want to do, so I will try to start that new title.

What will you be able to

do on PlayStation 3 that you couldn’t do before with Metal Gear?

I am thinking of many things that are possible, but I am always told by my staff not to say these things at the same time. But it’s an interview, so I have to say something! I would like to look a little closer at the things you can’t see. Of course, graphics, sound—these will be fantastic and will be very close to what we see in Hollywood today. The game, in the past, the game’s the same as almost creating a movie. There are places where you actually focus on, or the background, which actually the users can’t touch or see, but it’s there. These pictures, the visuals, of course, are a priority, but the background environment [is the] same as a movie, these locations. For instance, [an] example is that in the background in the game you see a house...but in that house, there’s no one living in it. It’s just there. But in the near future, you need to have maybe someone really living

The new logo for Kojima Productions, formerly known as Konami Computer Entertainment Japan West.



Metal Gear Solid 4

System: PS3 Developer: Kojima Productions
Publisher: Konami Available: TBA



Characters to be featured in MGS4 include (L-R) Vamp, Meryl, Raiden (returning), Revolver Ocelot, Solid Snake, Otacon, someone who Kojima called a “kind of unknown person” (though it looks like Solidus of Big Boss to us) and another mysterious character.

there in the house, or gardens/plants around that house in order to make a total atmosphere environment. So this is what I mean by saying in the past it was like a movie—the background as a set. But maybe we have to now consider the whole living environment altogether. And also on the fighting aspect, I do not want to just concentrate on what you can see in fighting as well. For instance, enemies, just using weapons or fighting with weapons. It’s more a war, it’s sometimes more to a psychological level, where you have psychological fear...it’s a battle, a psychological battle itself. Therefore, I want to emphasize that aspect as well, which is, again, something you cannot see. When you meet the enemy head to head, and you had guns pointed towards each other in the past, this was just a physical contact battle,

but in real life, it’s more a psychological thing. You have a fear when you point at somebody with a gun, et cetera. I want to put that kind of thinking in the enemies’ AI as well.

Why was there no gameplay footage at this year’s E3?

It’s because we are still creating!

How far along is the development then?

Well, we just actually finished [MGS3], so we’re just starting to experiment on things and we’re rolling and trying to get it rolling for [MGS]4.

Do you already know what the story is going to be?

Yes, it is set, but we’re experimenting if we could get that, really—that storyline



"But maybe, according to [the] situation, the situation moves along, time moves along, and maybe there will be nowhere to hide..."

HIDEO KOJIMA Head of Kojima Productions for Konami

Metal Gear Acid 2

System: PSP Developer: Kojima Productions
Publisher: Konami Available: TBA

Metal Gear Acid 2 continues the PSP's strategic, card-based take on Metal Gear, only now with a dynamic new cel-shaded art style. The game promises to have a new story that may be more directly tied to the Metal Gear mythos, and indications point to appearances by series mainstays like Revolver Ocelot and other popular characters.



C'mon, look at that trenchcoat! I can't be the only one who thinks he looks like Snatcher's Gillian Seed, can I?

[to fit] with the actual product. So we're experimenting that part too.

One of the things you said about MGS4 is that one of the themes will be "no place to hide." Doesn't that go against the theme of Metal Gear?

That's a good question, because I thought that people would really get puzzled with that! It's Metal Gear, so yes, we are keeping the stealth genre. ...I'm not supposed to say this part, but...as you know, there's a physical thing, and you hide behind that physical thing, and you try to proceed by hiding and going. So in the video...there was an attack on the wall, and the wall disappeared, and he had no place to hide. So in that sense we will create in some extent a situation where it's very difficult or [you're] not able to hide. As I said earlier, think of it as a movie set. In the past it was a movie set. It was there to hide. But maybe, according to [the] situation, the situation moves along, time moves along, and maybe there will be nowhere to hide, so you have to think hard [about] how to hide and proceed in the game, and that's one of the themes there.

Sounds like there will be more interactive and destructible environments, things like that. Yes, I could only say up to that part. But I can say yes, you're right.

Where did the idea for a humorous teaser come from?

Well, there were four concepts to the video actually, all of them mostly we discussed now. One is "no place to hide," the game concept that we wanted to tell the users, the people, and also we wanted to tell [them] that Kojima Productions has now started. Third point is that I will come back, have come back, or have always been there as a director. The fourth is that, yes, the main character will be Snake.

And also there's another hidden kind of concept there. We knew that this year at E3 there was going to be a lot of new next-gen hardware coming out—PS3, Xbox 360 and the Revolution—meaning

that in the combat genre, which Metal Gear is in, we thought that other titles or other combat genre [entries] would be more realistic and maybe somewhat gross because it's real, actual war. So we wanted to tell the users, you know, Metal Gear Solid is different. It is combat, the same genre itself in some way, but we're not going to be showing that gross way; we wanted to stand out and be different. And that was the hidden concept behind that.

I was looking at that nice folder you

"...Metal Gear Solid is different. It is combat... but we're not going to be showing that gross way; we wanted to stand out..."

HIDEO KOJIMA Head of Kojima Productions for Konami

handed out with characters featured on it, and judging from that and the teaser, it looks like Raiden is coming back. He's not the main character! But he's going to come back.

Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence

System: PS2 Developer: Kojima Productions
Publisher: Konami Available: TBA

Subsistence isn't just an enhanced MGS3—it also finally takes Metal Gear online, featuring team battles for up to eight players and a Snake vs. Enemies mode, where one player is Snake and the others have to stop him. Subsistence also adds a controllable over-the-shoulder camera to MGS3, along with all the enhancements of the European release, such as a boss duel mode and a cutscene theater. Plus: emulated MSX versions of the original Metal Gear and, for the first time in North America, Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake.



Moving on to Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence, what's the goal you have in mind for creating this game?

When we created Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance, I did not think we would make these kinds of add-ons in the future. But when we had a European launch event for Metal Gear Solid 3, I was requested by many people that they wanted this kind of Substance type, so that's why we decided to create Subsistence. And also, we were always experimenting the Metal Gear Online, meaning the online area, but we really didn't have a chance to get feedback from the users about online, so we thought this was a perfect chance... There will be online features there and we could get feedback, and we thought that was good timing.

How was the creation of the online mode different from creating the single-player game?

We thought that playing the game online is a much more fun experience than offline.

I wanted to ask about Metal Gear Acid 2, but it looks like I'm short on time, so I just wanted to ask about this screenshot here [indicating screenshot of a man on a toilet in the MGA2 materials]...is that Gillian Seed? No it isn't [laughing]...but you're very "into it."

Can I ask who it is? Is it Snake?

One of the characters from the game, but I cannot say who, or I will get staked by the staff. Maybe you know...we think you know, but you'll have to find out for yourself.

Finally, I know you hate this question, but now that Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake is coming to the U.S. with MGS3: Subsistence, have you reconsidered bringing Policenauts to the U.S.? Well, it's kind of difficult to bring it out now, because even creating old things, and remaking them need energy, and I don't want to put that energy into old things. That takes away my energy from creating new things. And I don't want to do that.



INTERVIEW

TOMONOBU ITAGAKI Producer, Team Ninja with translation by JOHN INATA



Grand Ninja Master

DEAD OR ALIVE 4 and NINJA GAIDEN BLACK

TOMONOBU ITAGAKI Producer, Team Ninja with translation by JOHN INATA

Interview by Dave Halverson

Sitting down with Itagaki is always an interesting endeavor. Among the throngs of developers we speak with each year, he is the most candid, uninhibited and frank, unafraid to be blatantly honest, critical of his fellow developers when need be and, best of all, he's completely unbridled when it comes to "PR" thanks in no small part to Tecmo's infrastructure as a pure, honorable, quality-driven publisher. He's an amazing talent, a surprisingly thoughtful human being and, for all of his well deserved-ego, genuinely appreciative of his fans.



play: So, with DOA 4, besides how epic the scope of each environment is, are you plugging in any additional elements?

Tomonobu Itagaki: The most important thing is to make the characters look as attractive as possible, so as much of the machine's power is being dedicated to that...that's our number-one priority. I hear you're a big anime fan, so I'm going to tell you this: I'm not very happy about lots of developers nowadays talking about photo-real style... that's not always best...

I look for games that are more exaggerated; the closer we come to realism, the less attractive many games become...

I do photography myself; it's one of my biggest hobbies, so I know quite a bit about photos. But when they talk about photorealism in a game, I don't feel like they truly understand it. All these developers know the math behind it, but I get the sense they don't understand anything about controlling the art of the drawing.

This is something we talk about a lot at the shop: the more real actual human models get, the worse some look. If they don't have the vision to craft an actual human, the results can be extremely awkward. We've been waiting to see once we reached this point where it would take us. The direction with DOA 4 is not photo-

real or anime; it's somewhere in the middle. We are going in a more fantasy direction; we're going to continue to expand the middle.

With DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball, we really started to see a marked leap in those types of models. The wonderful thing about video games is that you can create something better than human and that's where it fell. When that is achieved, it's wonderful...



Ninja Gaiden Black

System: Xbox Developer: Team Ninja
Publisher: Tecmo Available: September

The last 10 years I've been asked that so many times whether the DOA girls are modeled after real people... Sometimes when I was feeling tired or in a bad mood I'd just say: if real women out there looked this good, I wouldn't have to create them!

When I die and go wherever, I hope the DOA girls are waiting for me. [Smiling profusely] So of course the most important thing is you have to make the character feel good, and to do that, the fabric floating... how it moves with the controller, everything has to be right. The reason we can do this is because we know how to draw pictures, we know how to use the

available power to make it feel good when you play it—to connect the player to the character.

That's the difference between a "10" fighting game and an "eight"—the way it feels. That's always been the difference in 2D with Street Fighter and with Team Ninja in 3D with DOA. I've been wondering: since fighting games are essentially going to remain the same design-wise, where will the added power go? Dynamic collision? When we grab an arm now, will it look, react and feel totally real?

That is the ultimate goal for us, but unfortunately at this point we haven't gotten to that level...it's not that we can't do that; the thing about games is that you



Dead or Alive 4

System: Xbox 360 Developer: Team Ninja
Publisher: Tecmo Available: TBA



have to suspend disbelief sometimes by exaggerating what would happen in real life... You might be surprised to hear this, but I hear the fighting games I make are very liked and accepted by children... Experienced gamers focus on technique, but children respond to the look and feel...color... That is a more natural human reaction, and we have those elements in our game. The reason why children like my games is because children don't have any preconceived notions; reactions are natural. If you were to go to a country where there hadn't ever been any video games available and you lined up all the fighting games, I'm certain that everyone would prefer DOA.

Well, if you look at where games are going, where fighting games used to be considered violent, they land on the E side of the scale in comparison. It's getting ugly out there. If you look at fighters now, they weigh in on the E side of the scale. We are always leaning more towards fantasy.

So, *Ninja Gaiden Black*—is it going to be as hard? I know a lot of gamers had difficulty...and admittedly it was rock hard. Ninja Dog mode is essentially easy...

Did I see the original outfit in the demo?
The cloth one...yes. You noticed that? It was flashed for less than a second...

Yeah, of course...NES! Is there going to be steering with the right analog or will it still be "look"?
Camera? [Itagaki begins to draw and lays out his new camera.] The answer is yes.

You know, *Ninja Gaiden* the only perfect score I've ever given since



we started the magazine. It's the perfect action game.
So how will you score *Black*? [laughs]

Ten plus, I guess... Those new textures look amazing. Is that normal mapping? Even though we have tons of polygons, we still manage to achieve that effect easily. In the Sega Saturn days we had to really conserve polygons; that experience is really helping us today.

The other thing you do that few games do is proper collision, as in feet and

body language that matches the environment... This really keeps you in the game. Is this difficult?
Not that difficult at all...

Few games do it though... You come to rest on a slope and they stand normally feet floating in the air.

[More drawing ensues, and snickering.] At Team Ninja, we have that sensitivity towards the animation. With how well you like anime...you want everything to be perfect...seeing a heel float would just not

be acceptable. If you love animation, you don't want to see this. We spend a lot of available power to make sure feet and clothes react properly.

Is that why your games take so much longer—that level of care?

No, that's not why we're always behind or late. That's just my personal habit of not being able to let go of a project.

Not the worst thing in the world...I'll come back to your games for years.

[Itagaki begins doodling intensely again...drawing feet melting into surfaces.] The feet—so many people do this. To measure from this angle here to actually figure it out and do it... It's seventh-grade math.

That makes it even more sad....

The state of water surfaces is unfortunate too... [He begins scribbling out his latest take on water physics for his future projects, having characters negotiate floating platforms with their knees and legs reacting perfectly to the

"Experienced gamers focus on technique, but children respond to the look and feel...color..."

TOMONOBU ITAGAKI Producer, Team Ninja

water physics... incredible stuff.]

So what anime do you like? *Samurai Champloo*?

Yes. That, and I love old-school anime—hand-drawn. Now they mix CG... They do that purely for financial reasons...

Team Ninja is to games what Miyazaki is to anime.

Of course, I try to show respect for these artists when I do my work. Wanna see something I from cooked up from old-school anime? I purposely did it old-school style. [He fast-forwards to a place in *DOA4* obviously inspired by *Space Battleship Yamato*.] The building is a tribute to *Space Battleship Yamato*, and the scene after in the lab, that is the *Arcadia*...With that in mind watch this....

[I ooh and ah.] I knew I recognized that! A wonderful homage. So John, is there going to be a new *Rygar*?
John Inata: Yes, it's in the plan.

Life is good.



INTERVIEW

ATSUSHI INABA President and CEO of Clover Studios; producer of Okami



Leader of the pack

OKAMI

ATSUSHI INABA President and CEO of Clover Studios; producer of Okami

Interview by Chris Hoffman

It doesn't take a genius to see that video game companies love to jump on bandwagons and emulate others' successes until we can't take it anymore. (almost every company had some kind of thug/crime game at this year's E3), but it might take a genius to buck the trend and make a game that goes completely against the system. Atsushi Inaba is that genius, and Okami is that game—an original title that's completely refreshing and virtually the opposite of everything else out there. Derived from Japanese mythology, Okami is about a legendary sun god, Amaterasu, who comes to Earth in the form of a wolf, and uses the powers of nature and the Celestial Brush to battle the evil of the demon Orochi and proceed through worlds that look like classical Japanese paintings come to life.

The visual style is truly astounding—you have to see it in motion to truly appreciate it—and the gameplay, which combines third-person action and platforming with the use of the brush to manipulate the game world (drawing pathways, cutting down obstacles, eliminating enemies and much more), is simply brilliant.



making art is another thing. So I am more interested in people experiencing the beauty of the graphics and the world to get this whole world feeling of the game.

What separates a game from a game that's a work of art then?

My definition of "work of art" is more expression; it's more self-centered. All you need is to express yourself. But the game—when it comes to games, you have to involve people. You have to entertain people; you have to interact with people with the game media.

Where did the idea of using the Celestial Brush as a main gameplay element come from?

The original idea of the Celestial Brush is from the touch of the graphics that the

designer drew. Since the graphics were so rich and so nice and so intriguing, we had to somehow make sense [of] this whole game. It's not just the graphics; there has to be something more to it. So we were figuring out how to make this art style, and then the whole game bounced together, and that was the brush touch of the painting, and that's when we figured out that maybe it would work out with the world and the theme and the story and the whole image of the game.

So the concept of the wolf came first, then the graphics, then the paintbrush?

Yes.

"My passion is going against the trends, kind of avant-garde, so my staff always has to struggle. But that's always going to be the same..."

ATSUSHI INABA President and CEO of Clover Studios; producer of Okami

play: What compels you to create a game like Okami?

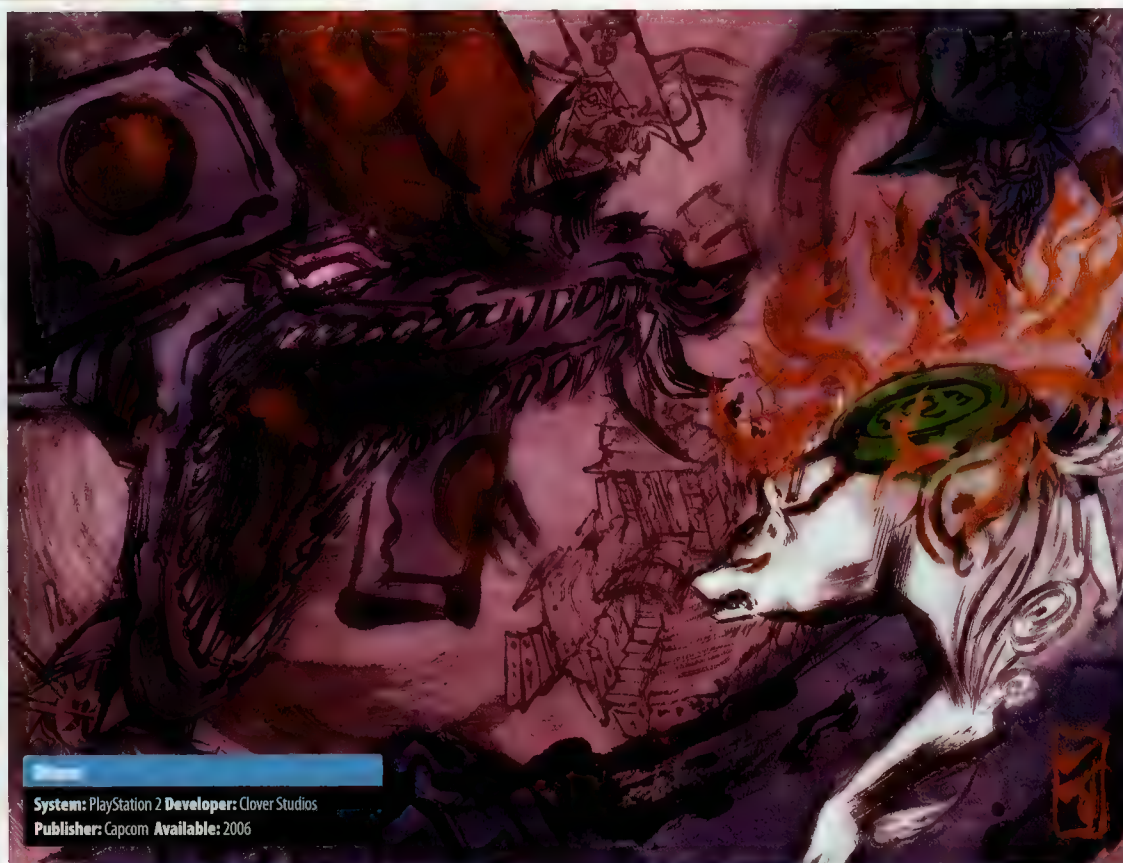
Atsushi Inaba: The original idea was totally different. It was a photorealism theme, and it evolved from photorealism to the Japanese style of graphics and everything in the production stage.

What was the motivation for the painting-like art style that was used?

At the beginning, like I said, the original idea was photorealism, but then the photorealism idea reached the limits of the specifications of the hardware and we couldn't do it any more. So then everybody on the team was struggling with the idea of not using photorealism and trying to figure out the new style, and one of the designers was playing with [his] brush and painting just a character, and that's where the art style came from. It was just his playing, his sketch.

When I look at the game, it doesn't look like just a game, but more a work of art. Is that what you're trying to do with the game?

One of the goals that my team was shooting for was to make something that was very visually intriguing and striking, and trying to make something that's visually interesting and very beautiful is one thing, but also,



System: PlayStation 2 Developer: Clover Studios
Publisher: Capcom Available: 2006



How much of this game is your personal vision, your concept?

Concept-wise, it would be 100 percent.

Everything about the game is so unique—the character, the graphics, the gameplay. What makes you stick to making a game that's so unique like this instead of going with the latest trends?

My passion is going against the trends, kind of avant-garde, so my staff always has to struggle. But that's always going to be the same, and that's why I established Clover Studio.

The nature theme seems very strong. Are there certain thoughts about nature you're trying to express through the game?

At the beginning, I was talking with the director...that [our staff] all had very good skills and techniques of making very realistic, good graphics, but they've only been experienced by [a game featuring] violence or blood or horror or something that's more violent. So we wanted to make something that's photorealistic, or using very high technique and very good skill, to express something healing, like nature. That's where that comes from.

What made you use a wolf as the main character?

There's been so many games that have the main character as a human, and I wanted to make something different, so I made the main character as an animal. But because the main theme was nature, as in big, wild nature, I wanted to use something very mystical and very stylish, which is where the wolf came from.

What did you think when you saw the new Zelda, where Link turns into a wolf?

They stole it! I am kidding, but it was pretty similar, so I was kind of feeling uncomfortable about that.

Since the character is a wolf, are you doing anything specifically so that players can relate to the character, or is that causing you any difficulties?

You know, [in a] game like Halo, being a very strong hero, or like GTA, being like mafia, [that] is the one thing that people can easily get into: [being a] very strong figure or very cool character. But the Okami is like an animal, but then it's not. Amaterasu is not just an Okami, a wolf. He's a sender of the god. You can actually feel like you're the god that is sending him away to do many tasks. So that's kind of



"So we wanted to make something...using very high technique and very good skill, to express something healing, like nature."

ATSUSHI INABA President and CEO of Clover Studios; producer of Okami

the idea I have.

Given the whole aspect of drawing in the game, did you ever think of making Okami on the DS, or bringing a version to the DS?

The idea of drawing on the screen would be one thing that works for DS, but because of the wild nature that's very big, and the graphics and everything, [it] probably doesn't fit with the DS style, because it's so small and you can't experience the whole beauty of nature.

Other than what we've talked about so far, what else makes this game unique?

The beautiful, unique graphic style, and then the Celestial Brush, the brush technique. The combination of these will give the player a new experience of healing and refreshing as a player. I'm hoping to bring this new feeling to all the people playing the game.

When I look at this game, it seems like it should be a GameCube game. Why have it on PS2 and not GameCube?

I agree that the style of the game, like action-adventure, or the graphical style would be maybe [well-suited] on GameCube, but I wanted to spread this game around as much of the people as possible, and PlayStation 2 is probably the most popular hardware that people can probably get to know more than the GameCube can. It would be the best if I could make it for all the hardware, but because of the development and

the uniqueness and everything, I can't follow up all the hardware right now.

Do you consider it a risk to make such a unique game like this?

Every time! I think that I must like taking risks.

Then why do it? Why take the risks?

It's not that I'm interested in taking risks for anything, but because when you're trying to make something that's interesting and unique, that always results in a high risk.

Are you making any attempts to appeal to the casual gamer with this, or are you not going to worry about them?

I'm hoping that everybody can grab the controller and touch it and experience Okami. The battle style of Okami is actually not as hard as people can imagine. It's just pressing buttons and using the controller, not like lots of buttons-action-related game. But I am also considering the hardcore gamer to enjoy the game as well, with the different combos and stuff that they can execute for the game as well.

I wanted to ask a few questions about Viewtiful Joe as well, but it seems I've run out of time, so I'll just ask one: what can we expect from Viewtiful Joe VFX Battles?

It's unlike Viewtiful Joe 1 or Viewtiful Joe 2. It's not like a 2D side-scroller, old-school style. It is similar, but the style is different. It's more that a lot of people can enjoy having fun; it's not this high-skill expected game. It's more that lots of people can enjoy this type of game and maybe bring a new dimension to the Viewtiful Joe world.

Viewtiful Joe DS & VFX Battles

System: DS (VJ DS), PSP, GC (VFX Battles) **Developer:** Clover Studios **Publisher:** Capcom **Available:** Winter

Inaba's other revolutionary franchise, Viewtiful Joe, also had a strong showing at this year's E3. Finally shown for the first time after being announced a year ago, Viewtiful Joe DS (working title) adds new powers to Joe's arsenal, such as the ability to split and move a portion of the screen, and a new character in the form of Joe's little sister, Jasmine. The game looks fantastic on Nintendo's handheld. Meanwhile, over on GameCube and PSP, Joe and all of his pals and rivals will be mixing it up in the fighting action of Viewtiful Joe VFX Battle. Look for Sylvia, Captain Blue Junior, Alastor and many other characters to appear, including several from the anime.





INTERVIEW

KOJI IGARASHI Producer, Castlevania w/ MICHIRU YAMANE Composer



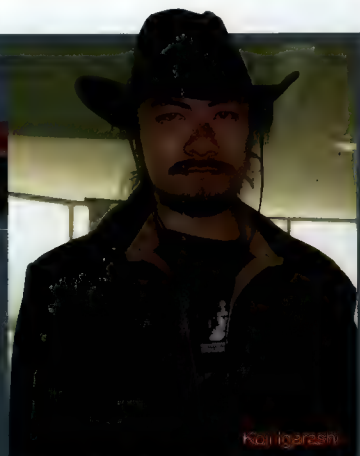
Lord of the Castle

CASTLEVANIA

KOJI IGARASHI Producer, Castlevania
w/ MICHIRU YAMANE Composer

Interview by Chris Hoffman
and Brady Fiechter

Castlevania producer Koji "Iga" Igarashi is probably feeling like the walking dead these days, considering that he's currently pulling double duty readying two Castlevania titles for release this fall: Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow for the DS and Castlevania: Curse of Darkness for PlayStation 2 and Xbox. Aside from the surprise announcement that Curse of Darkness is going multiplatform, Iga also revealed that Trevor Belmont, star of Castlevania III, will make a significant appearance in the game (which makes sense considering that the game is set only three years later) and also showed off some of the game's new creatures, including a fairy Innocent Devil who can open locked treasure chests and a massive minotaur boss that pulls columns



off the walls and pounds you with them. Dawn of Sorrow (note the "DS" initials in the title), meanwhile, continued to look as beautiful as 2D Castlevania can be, delivering Symphony of the Night-like action, a gorgeous anime-style intro, and an enhanced soul system that will let Soma obtain multiple souls of the same type to power-up his abilities even further. Despite his hectic schedule, Iga, along with Castlevania composer Michiru Yamane, took the time to discuss his latest descents into darkness.

play: That was a nice whip you had at the press conference yesterday. What do you use it for?

Koji Igarashi: There's only one thing I can think of... I use it to beat all of the zombies away.

There's many, many zombies in this city. We last talked about Castlevania: Curse of Darkness about two months ago, and I was wondering how the game has progressed since then.

Igarashi: In the E3 trial demo, I guess the three modes I presented to you in the pre-E3 [meeting] are more distinctive. The gameplay itself...remember the Innocent Devils' three modes? [Auto, standby, defend.] It's much easier to understand, I guess. Of course, it will be polished a lot more in the final product, but the wishes that I had from the event two months ago, to have more depth with the support mode, those have been added with the E3 trial demo, so I'm so happy that I was able to bring out the good gameplay this time. And there are a couple enemy designs that will look different from the one you saw.

So...Trevor! Is he playable within the main game, or is that a separate game mode where you play as him?

"Trevor...doesn't believe that Hector is out of Dracula's party. There's...sort of a misunderstanding."

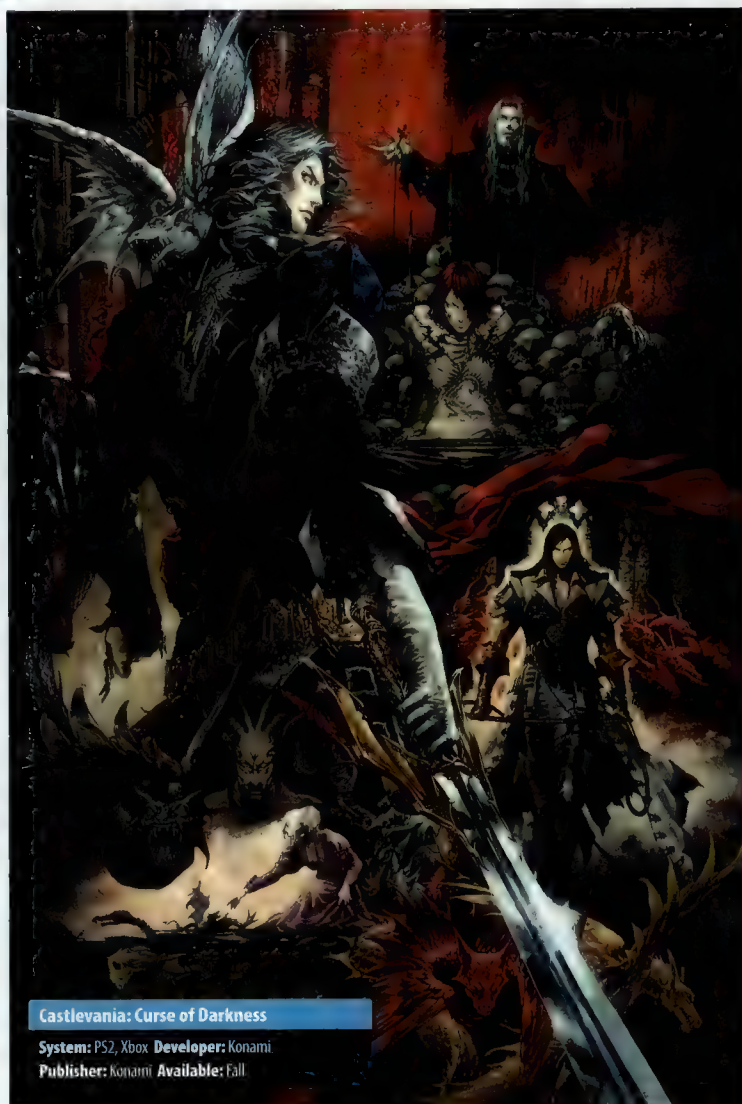
KOJI IGARASHI Producer, Castlevania

Igarashi: [laughing] It's up to your imagination.

Oh, it'll just be between us.

Igarashi: This is Castlevania, where you can fight with your allies. That's Curse of Darkness. The main character, Hector, is [out] for revenge against Isaac, and that's the main storyline. And there are complicated interactions with Trevor. There are many complicated thoughts in this storyline, and Trevor is one of them. So, as a main character, it's only Hector.

Is Trevor playable then, or is he one of the allies?



Castlevania: Curse of Darkness

System: PS2, Xbox Developer: Konami
Publisher: Konami Available: Fall

Igarashi: If I'm talking about the main mode of the game...I guess he's not assisting. He's more like an enemy. You see, Hector used to be one of Dracula's companions. Though Hector says that he's not under Dracula's drip anymore, Trevor will not believe him. Trevor is confident with what he is doing...so he doesn't believe that Hector is out of Dracula's party. There's...sort of a misunderstanding.

Do you find it personally gratifying to put Trevor in the game?

Igarashi: Yes, of course.

Any chance Sypha or Grant will appear?

Igarashi: Sypha's married already, so

she's protecting her household...I'm not thinking much about Grant...I guess he's so busy rebuilding the city...remember, there are ruined towns? He needs to, I guess, reconstruct the whole town.

Too busy to appear in the game, eh?

Igarashi: I think that is right.

You've been making Castlevania a long time now. What maintains your passion for the series?

Igarashi: Simply, I love that atmosphere—the world of Castlevania. I have the stained glass. Again, I love that kind of world.

I was going to ask you what defines Castlevania for you. For me personally,



"Simply, I love that atmosphere—the world of Castlevania. I have the stained glass. Again, I love that kind of world."

KOJI IGARASHI Producer, Castlevania

my answer was going to be the atmosphere. Being in the castle and being in that Gothic mood.

Igarashi: Don't you think vampiric-based stories are aesthetic and very beautiful?

Absolutely. There's a balance between the darkness and the beauty.

Igarashi: And I love it too.

It's very powerful and very mysterious. I was going to ask: if you compared yourself to one of the enemies in the game, perhaps you would be most like Dracula, or find him most interesting?

Igarashi: A difficult question to answer. Dracula is so selfish...from that point, maybe I am close to Dracula, but... Since I'm a sloppy person, there's a new character that we haven't revealed... orange-costumed guy, he's a brand-new character. I'm going to be showing to you in the future, but he's a character that I think that I'm close to.

When you think back to all the Castlevanias...do you have something you look back on in Castlevania that you remember?

Igarashi: Obviously, I made Symphony of the Night, and so I have so many special thoughts toward that game, but as a player, when I wasn't involved with Castlevania projects, in Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse, in the clock tower, on the way to the clock tower, over the bridge, it destructs, and you have to get back. That's the most impressive.

You mentioned atmosphere and how important atmosphere is, how defining it is to Castlevania. You must have

great respect for your musician because she is such a large part of that.

Igarashi: Yes, I'm totally relying on her!

Any new surprises for the latest game?

Michiru Yamane: I have prepared a vocal soundtrack. Please look forward to it.

Absolutely. I tend to ask musicians what they listen to. Not necessarily what inspires you, but what would I find in your CD player?

Yamane: I listen to many [types of] music, like movie soundtracks, traditional classic music. I love jazz. I listen to almost anything.

About the vocal accompaniment in the latest Castlevania. Does that present a new mode of challenge for you?

Yamane: This is my first time having a vocal soundtrack. I started off by convincing team staff members to understand how important [it is] to have a vocal soundtrack. As a music composer, of course, I study a lot to come up with notes where a singer can put the vocal over the score. That's something—I'm a professional, so I was able to [do it]—but there's so many other things that I have to work on. And from the business side, I encountered a lot of problems. There are budget issues. There are other limitations. Igarashi: We had to come up with the lyrics, you know, and the recording schedule. It was so tough!

Yamane: It was so challenging, yes. And I guess, it's satisfying, a vocal soundtrack. I really want to announce this soon, but we can't talk further at this point.

So what made you decide to bring the game to Xbox?

Igarashi: When we think of North American territories, we cannot ignore Xbox anymore.

Talking from a company perspective, obviously the Silent Hill team has achieved Xbox development already. Using that know-how, we decided to go with a simultaneous release for Xbox and PS2 as well.

Good to hear. Is it going to come out in Japan on Xbox?

Igarashi: I don't think we will release it in Japan.

Now, you mentioned yesterday that the gameplay will be the same in both versions, but will the Xbox version be enhanced graphically?

Igarashi: I'll do as much as I can. Of course, we want to come up with enhanced graphics, especially with Castlevania where the main game, PS2 game, is made under 60 fps. It seems that having 60 fps games on the Xbox is tough work when enhancing graphics, so that's something I'm under discussion with the team, and I'm going to do my best.

I'm assuming this is your last PS2 or Xbox game. What are your thoughts on moving into PS3?

Igarashi: I haven't been up to that point to think about it. Sorry, I'm so stuck with my work! Like every night, especially when I'm here in LA, gosh, I have so many things to sort out! I'm not even to the point where I can go [check out] PS3. So I would like to think about it when things are settled.

Asking about the DS version now, how did it feel for Konami executives to call Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow the most anticipated game for the DS?

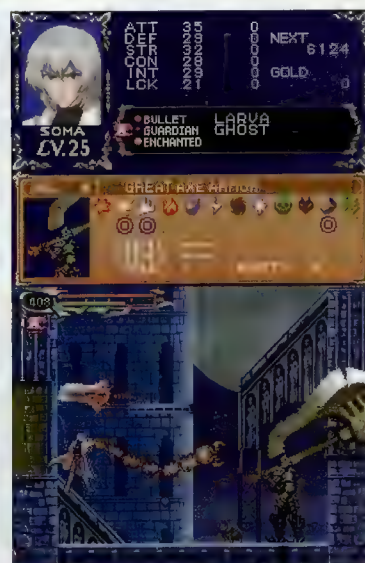
Igarashi: I'm very honored to hear that.

Do you feel any pressure from those comments?

Igarashi: It's not pressure. It's, rather, a big encouragement toward the development team staff, including me. Of course, our main task is to make the best game, no matter who's expecting or who's not expecting.

I was wondering about the DS. How does the technology and the development experience compare to making Symphony of the Night on PS1?

Igarashi: With Symphony of the Night, we only had minimal members of the development team staff, and we worked on it for a long period of time to complete the game. Because the team wanted to make [Dawn of Sorrow] closer to the hardware launch, we changed the style to have a lot of development team staff, but to make it in a short time period. Actually, I think that having minimal members and working for a long period is much [more] efficient than the DS [approach]. It was really hard to have all the members with DS, since there's such a huge number, to share all kinds of stuff this time.



Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow

System: Nintendo DS **Developer:** Konami
Publisher: Konami **Available:** Fall

How would you compare the hardware capabilities of PS1 and DS, special features aside?

Igarashi: Transparency is less compared to PS1. In my impression, but having background and enemy design, it seems that with DS technology, you can compile GBA and DS graphics together, and if you compile these two, it's much better than PS1 for sure. So from graphic capability, DS is obviously better than PS1. So with the multi-scroll, it's obviously easier to do it with DS than PS1.

I really liked that Castlevania animation you showed for Dawn of Sorrow yesterday. When does that fit into the game?

Igarashi: In the title loop screen. I wanted to make it used for PR, so that's why I came up with the nice movie.

Can you tell me about the new characters?

Igarashi: Remember, there's one lady with the blonde hair? She's Celia Fortner, the leader of the cult. A guy with fire from his hands, a red-haired guy? He's Dario Bossi, the same as Graham from Aria of Sorrow; he's one of the candidates for dark evil. Blue [suited] guy? Beetle hair? He's Dmitrii Blinov, another candidate for dark evil. He has the power for duplicating the power he's retrieved. These two are the candidates. So the leader of the cult is trying to have either of these two guys to be the dark evil, to obtain the power by going after Soma's life.

Considering the quality of the animation footage, have you thought about going into talks about a Castlevania anime?

Igarashi: I wish I could have an anime... no luck so far. That's why I wanted to appeal this during E3. That's why I made some nice footage.



INTERVIEW

MICHEL ANCEL Producer, King Kong



Monsieur Ancel goes to Hollywood

KING KONG

MICHEL ANCEL Producer, King Kong

Interview by Dave Halverson

We were Michel Ancel's last interview at this year's E3, emerging from the high-security King Kong theatre and deposited in front of the man himself: father to Rayman and Jade, now step-dad to King Kong. Speaking with Michel about King Kong was admittedly a bit odd, as we're accustomed to speaking with him about all things anti-mainstream such as BG&E and Rayman; luckily he's brought that sense of wonder with him to King Kong.



play: This is so unlike anything we've seen from you...first-person action into the likes of King Kong platforming... What was the biggest challenge going from a human to the immense physics of Kong?

Michel Ancel: The FPS/human parts were much easier to do; the only difficulty was in all of the real-time interactions with the characters and environment, as so much is free-form. On the big Kong scale, we needed seven months to reach a point where we were satisfied. At first we felt he was moving too fast, so we had to slow down; it was a challenge matching him with realistic scope elements.

The white-water rafting and those T-rex spray effects...can you achieve the same effects on PS2? [The demo was running on Xbox.]

Yeah, PS2, same visuals...

Even the fur effect on Kong?

Yes, yes, of course...

What's the flow of the gameplay like? Does it switch in accordance with the film?

No, no... Working with Peter Jackson, we've rewritten a story just for the game. We want gamers to experience separate experiences... So you won't have live movie footage [in the] game...

So you'll be cutting from game to CG...

There's no CGI. There are cutscenes in the game...but what you see is always in-game.

So Peter Jackson has given you the liberty to make a great game... Is he involved in the process or, based on your body of work, confident in whatever direction you take it?

He says, "You're on the right track." We started early with him, so he laid down the parameters...the humanity of Kong, etc. He's a very giving, calm and expressive person.

Has working on a movie game changed your normal process?

Yes, because we're working with two characters and a dynamic story working together with Peter Jackson...

So, Jack Black in the game... That is so him. Did he come in for voice and animation?

Yes... Ah, he is great...

Are you using art from the artists on the film? Do you have full access to all the film assets?

Yes; some of the creatures are from the movie, but they gave us the resources to create our own as well.

Would you say this is your most ambitious project?

No...not really; it's the biggest and most confidential, but not in terms of complexity compared to Beyond Good & Evil with all of the planets, vehicles, water, characters... It's Peter Jackson, so it is huge, but the story is quite simple.

How did Peter Jackson choose your studio over EA after Lord of the



System: PS2, Xbox, GC, PC **Developer:** Ubisoft Montpellier **Publisher:** Ubisoft **Available:** Winter



"...[Peter Jackson] laid down the parameters;...the humanity of Kong, etc. He's a very giving, calm and expressive person."

Michel Ancel, Producer, King Kong

Rings? You'd think the all-powerful EA would have snagged it...

He came to us because he's a gamer... He loved BG&E. Big Halo fan too.

So are you looking forward to doing an original game for next-gen?

Yes, definitely. The challenge is going to be in doing movie-quality animation... This is going to really change everything.

Do you see yourself ever doing BG&E sequel?

It's 100 percent up to Ubisoft. Currently I have no plans for it for the future...

Do you prefer producing original content fresh or sequels?

I prefer to heighten the quality through sequels...but two or three is enough. Any more and you'll make fun of me...

Not us! So then, are you able to pick and choose your projects because of your body of work?

Ubisoft has always been great about this; I've always chosen. I work on something because I want to.

Guess that explains it.





INTERVIEW

TAKAO MIYOKI Producer, Phantasy Star Universe



Universal appeal

PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE

TAKAO MIYOKI Producer, Phantasy Star Universe

Interview by Michael Hobbs

Phantasy Star Universe was looking good at E3. It may have been only a brief two-level demo, but the action and graphics were there. Though it was obviously a bit early to talk about the online portion of Phantasy Star Universe, there was still a bit to be learned about its deep one-player game and what the game's producer, Takao Miyoki, likes to do to get cozy.



play: Does Phantasy Star Universe share anything of a story with previous games?

Takao Miyoki: No. It's a totally, completely different world. There is no relation to any timeline at all.

What drove you to create such an involved single-player game over Phantasy Star Online?

Even though there was a single-player mode in PSO, the story element was pretty limited. So what I really wanted to was offer a deeper, broader, more engaging storyline to give the player a classic RPG experience.

How much overlap is there between the online and offline portions of the game?

The offline and online storyline take place during the same timeline, so the offline game you get to see the story from Ethan Weber's point of view. For online you get to create your own character and see the story from that point of view.

Will you always have computer-controlled partners helping you in the offline game?

Yes. In story mode (offline mode), the player will always be able to adventure together with NPCs.

PSO featured a wonderful color balance and very appealing texture work. Are some of the same artists involved in PSU?

Yes. Some of the staff members did work on PSO.

Will completing the single-player game affect the online game in anyway? I would like to get a special Mag!
I cannot comment at this time.

While it would be easy to offer new online levels for the PC version of Phantasy Star Universe, not many PS2 users have the HDD accessory and would only be able to download new quests. How will you deal with this issue?

I cannot comment at this time.

Will Mag raising return?

It will not be the same, but PSU will have a feature similar to the Mags in PSO.

Will there be a market system in the online portion of the game?

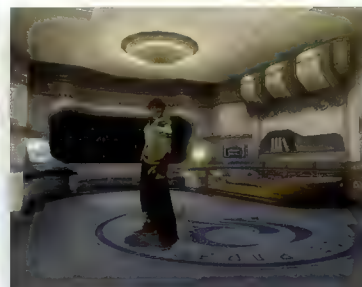
PSU will feature an improved system, but that's all we can say at this time.

Four players seemed ideal for the style of play offered in PSO. Will this remain the same in PSU?

We are still determining this.

What most excites you about creating games for the next generation? Is it the increased visual impact or more freedom in game design?

The visuals that next-generation hardware can achieve are very impressive. By improving graphic quality and processing speed (especially increasing numbers of character models that can appear on screen), I'm expecting we can offer tremendous gameplay advances in future games.



Phantasy Star Universe

System: PS2, PC Developer: Sonic Team
Publisher: Sega Available: Spring 2006

What do you do to relax and get your mind away from making games?
I always drive my car.

Do you have time to play games when you're not working?

I enjoy board games with my friends rather than playing video games alone. Board games make me feel cozy because I can communicate openly with other players sitting right in front of me. That's why I like it.

"...what I really wanted to was offer a deeper, broader, more engaging storyline to give the player a classic RPG experience."

TAKAO MIYOKI Producer



INTERVIEW

AKITOSHI KAWAZU Producer/director HIROSHI TAKAI Battle system director w/ REI KAWANO and MICHIO OKAMIYA Publicity division, Square Enix



The choice is yours

ROMANCING SAGA

AKITOSHI KAWAZU Producer/director HIROSHI TAKAI Battle system director
w/ REI KAWANO and MICHIO OKAMIYA Publicity division, Square Enix

Interview by Chris Hoffman

The SaGa games have been met with mixed opinions in their previous incarnations in the U.S., but the developers at Square Enix are looking to give the series a fresh start with Romancing SaGa—which is fitting, since this game is a re-envisioning of the 16-bit Super Famicom game that marked the series' debut on console. Although the original was never released in North America, many aspects of the game will be familiar to SaGa players, including

eight main characters to choose from: Albert, the prince; Aisha, the nomad; Jamil, the thief; Claudia, the forest child; Captain Hawk, the pirate; Sif, the female fighter; Gray, the lone warrior, and Barbara, the dancer. Each has a unique story and non-linear gameplay, but no matter who you choose, you'll be treated to a deep battle system, a mesmerizing artistic style and a date to battle Saruin, an evil god long thought banished but looking to make his return...

play: The phrase I saw on the trailer for Romancing SaGa was "limitless choices." What does that mean?

Akitoshi Kawazu: There's no determined story until the very end. There's nothing the player has to do. The game begins with an event scene like this, which describes what each [character] is doing. But after that ends, the player has total freedom over what they're doing.

Is there such a thing as giving the player too much freedom?

Kawazu: Yes, it might be possible. And we might be doing that.

Since this is a remake of the original 16-bit Romancing SaGa, how would you compare the two? How is it different? The graphics, obviously, but what about other regards?

Kawazu: As you are completely aware, games in general have advanced quite a lot in the last 10 years, and so many adjustments have been made to bring the game more in line with what games have become. For example, there have been modifications to the game's tempo and how quickly the player can advance through the story. Games a long time ago may have been just far too difficult for most mortal people, so the game has been made more approachable for the average user. Hiroshi Takai: And in regards to systems that didn't exist in the original game—things like learning skills in the middle of combat, and also a completely new [attack] combination system, and new systems that let you create

different spells on your own have been added in order to increase the fun factor of the game.

Now, the last SaGa game in the U.S. was Unlimited SaGa, and it wasn't very well received here. How will you change people's perceptions about the series?

Takai: In order to cater to the users in the U.S., the gameplay has been changed to be less stoic and more accommodating. And also, it's much more explosive and extravagant in the graphics and presentation. And we've included a great many explanations and tutorials to instruct the player in how the game systems work.

I've heard the term "sketch motion" used for the visuals. Why did you go with this graphical style?

Kawazu: Right now, there are a great many RPGs that try to use a realistic style, and so to differentiate this title from those, we decided to go with a style that conveys a more artistic feel to it. That's what we mean.

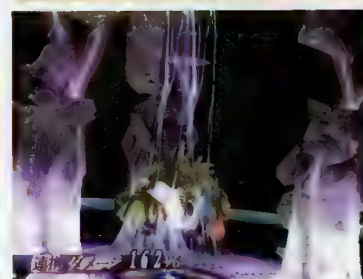
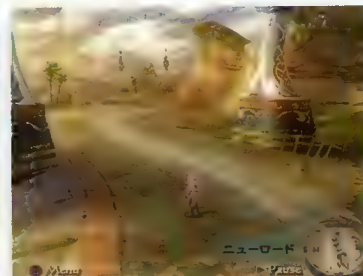
I was wondering about the minstrel. What is his significance in the game?

Kawazu: The minstrel is actually a god who has assumed human form. He's not only a god, but he's the god who created the world and also imprisoned the evil god Saruin one-thousand years ago. And he senses that Saruin is about to return, so in order to stop that, he leads



Romancing SaGa

Developer: PlayStation 2 Developer: Square Enix
Publisher: Square Enix Available: Fall



"Right now, there are a great many RPGs that try to use a realistic style...we decided to go with a style that conveys a more artistic feel to it."

AKITOSHI KAWAZU Producer/director, Romancing SaGa

the players and gives them advice on their journey. And that's what the real role of the minstrel is.

Why feature eight different characters? Why not one character and one storyline?

Kawazu: It's true that if you were to simply focus on the storytelling and try to tell a compelling story, then you would try to create a game with just one character and focus completely on that character. However, the goal here was to give the player more choice in how he or she plays the game. ...If I am playing a game, I feel much more connected to it if I'm able to choose my own character and have more choice in my own adventure. So that's why we decided to give the player as much choice as possible.

Is there any special reward for hardcore players who complete the game with every character?

Kawazu: Although I am certain that very few players will ever see it, there is a special visual presentation at the very end of the ending once the player finishes through with all eight characters.

Lastly, I was wondering if each member

of the team could tell me who their favorite character is and why.

Rei Kawano: My favorite is Albert, the young noble with the blond hair, because he's a very dependable character who always looks out for other people, and he seems like a little brother to me. That kind of dependability is something that I like.

Michio Okamiya: I like Captain Hawk, the pirate. As a pirate, I like him because it's a gung-ho thing that men prefer—a very manly adventure! Also, Captain Hawk can adventure very freely throughout the world, and so I like that freedom.

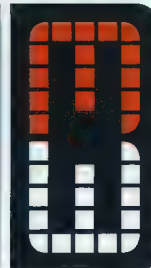
Takai: My favorite is Barbara, the dancer. As a traveling dancer, she doesn't have any specific goal that she absolutely must do, and so the game doesn't try to push her in any direction. I like the freedom of being able to go wherever I please.

Kawazu: I like Claudia the best, because, similar to Albert, she seems like she could be the game's main character. And the game has also a great many special events that only Claudia can do, and that sort of focus is what I like the best.



INTERVIEW

YOSHINORI SASAKI Producer, Ys: The Ark of Napishtim



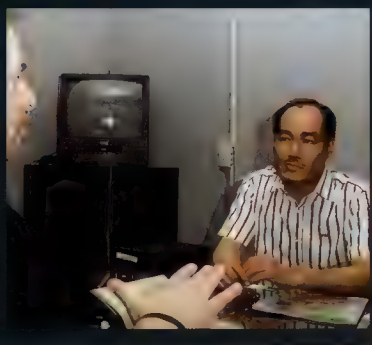
Wandering to PSP

Ys: THE ARK OF NAPISHTIM

YOSHINORI SASAKI Producer, Ys: The Ark of Napishtim

Interview by Dave Halverson

I've been a huge Ys fan on and off since the game's inception—on when there was a good sequel to be had and off when it went in the tank with Ys V. Ark of Napishtim brought the series half of the way back, but due to some, shall we say, USDA modifications, fell somewhat short. Here's how producer Yoshinori Sasaki is addressing fans' concerns with a more pure version for PSP...



play: I loved the anime opening in the PC version. Why did Konami Computer Entertainment America go with anti-anime-style CG?

Yoshinori Sasaki: The PSP version will have only the anime opening, although it is hidden in the PS2 game. It's actually a cheat code. You can find it now on the website. The PSP will have its own codes as well.

Great—the one time I'll use a code. Conventional wisdom in America is that anime-based games need to be Americanized, but anime is getting huge. They hacked the PC soundtrack too for the PS2 version... You'll be happy to hear that for the PSP we've gone back to the original music as well...

Did you ever consider approaching Yuzo Koshiro to do the score? For many U.S. gamers, Ys was the first action-RPG we ever played, and the soundtrack really made the experience. Somehow smashing into enemies was made transfixing. [Laughs] We would have loved to, but it wasn't an option for Konami.

So this is a more religious port from PC to PSP...

Yes; the PS2 version has a lot of additional content created by Konami. The PSP version will have some too, but is much closer to the PC version.

So is the HP system closer? I know it was made easier for PS2.

The PS2 had some assistance to help

the player along. The PSP version will do this in a different way.

What about speech? Are you using the same voice track?

No voice-over track...

All text? Nice. Isn't it difficult to detail such little polygonal characters? Why the change to polys for the PS2 version?

Konami wanted the PS2 version to look as "new" as possible, but we're making the PSP game as close to the original as possible... It's a big challenge, because sprites eat up more memory, but we're doing it. It's a lot harder to calculate everything. The PSP is designed for 3D... It's a struggle making it do sprites.

How does it compare to PS2 dev-wise?

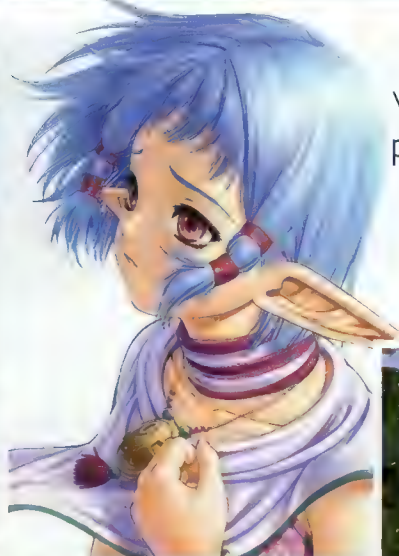
It has power, especially 3D, but the memory is what people struggle with. For 2D, the art memory to make [all of the] sprites—we need more memory. The enemies and characters all need multiple angles.

It's worth it! It'll be much appreciated. Sounds like this is going to be more of what the game fans wanted... Dedicated Ys fans, I think, prefer sprites. Should be even better received, and it's certainly a game better suited for handheld. There's too much competition on PS2.

Dedicated Ys fans in Japan are doing the same thing—looking for the anime look—so they are waiting for the PSP version as well...

Didn't the PC game sell like 500,000 copies in Japan?

Yes, it did very well.



"Konami wanted the PS2 version to look as 'new' as possible, but we're making the PSP game as close to the original as possible..."

YOSHINORI SASAKI Producer,
Ys: The Ark of Napishtim



Ys V wasn't received well at all, then we saw a big gap... Does this signal a rebirth of the series? Will it continue?

It is being considered...the next installment. It's our next meeting in Japan. Falcom is asking us to publish their new Ys too, due out in Japan June 30 on PC, which is a remake of Ys III: Wanderers from Ys.

That was a great game. Looking forward to that. Who produced the anime for Napishtim? Was it pulled from the series?

Not sure if I'm allowed to say, but Falcom outsourced it... Character design was outsourced; the animation was done in-house.

How do you gauge or balance how long the player needs to level up in fields to prepare for each dungeon?

Focus groups divided between the best

Ys: The Ark of Napishtim

System: PSP Developer: Konami/Falcom

Publisher: Konami Available: Fall

and worst players, then we balance.

Ah, so you conduct them too! What about boss battles? More about the level of your character or memorizing patterns?

Combo of both. Memorizing patterns takes precedent in design though. But for weaker players...it's set so great players can advance quicker, while those that are not can level up and eventually take them down easily. It's for the player to sort out... And the elements you equip also factor in, of course.

So we get the PC music, anime cutscenes and sprites... This was a good interview!

Yes; tell all your readers!



Dave Halverson
Editor in Chief

Dave critiques every game based on how well it hits its target audience, and has been practicing what he preaches in print for 13 years. He truly lives for his games. Within everything Dave writes, you will also find a little bit of his personal love of the art of gaming and game creation, the driving force in his life outside of music and actual human interaction.

Favorite genres: Platformers, adventure, motocross, action-RPGs, 2D
Now playing: Darkwatch, Death Jr.
Favorite Villain: Queen Pulsating, Bloated, Festering, Pus-filled Slug-for-a-butt (EWJ)



Brady Fiechter
Executive Editor

Brady feels that when you've been playing video games since video games were invented, you tend to start to look past the unnecessary need to boil a game down to its mechanical parts and start to see the artistry and spirit of imagination that goes into its creation. It's never as simple as polygons and cool explosions.

Favorite genres: Adventure, first-person shooters, action, RPGs
Now playing: Meteos
Favorite Villain: The Grim Reaper (Castlevania)



Chris Hoffman
Senior Editor

Chris is extremely loyal to his gaming roots, and doesn't believe that just because a game (or concept) is old it isn't any good. On the contrary, Chris thinks that more of the same only better is definitely a good thing, although he's always looking for new experiences to take gaming to new heights. He's also amassing a squirrel army to conquer the greater Agoura Hills area.

Favorite genres: RPGs, action, adventure, fighting, wrestling
Now playing: Meteos
Favorite Villain: Ghaleon (Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete)

Reviews

July 2005

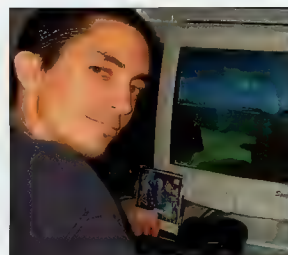
Killer 7 070

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Advent Rising 074

Destroy All Humans! 076

Review Gallery 078



Mike Griffin
PC Editor

Even as a wee lad playing Zaxxon on Coleco, the technology and artistry of game design has always fascinated Mike. He thinks some games are timeless in that respect, whether 2D, 3D, flat-shaded or bump mapped. Mike's goal is to equip the readers with accurate information, so that limited funds and time can be put to good use.

Favorite genres: MMORPGs, first-person shooters, action-adventure
Now playing: Guild Wars
Favorite Villain: Mr. X (Streets of Rage 2)



Ashley "Veela" Esqueda
Associate Editor

To Ashley, video games are like magnificent pieces of art: you don't break down the piece as a whole to comment on the brush stroke method or colors used. She thanks her mother for playing Castlevania II after school, and everyone in elementary school for shunning her, because without them, her obsession with gaming would not have been possible.

Favorite genres: Action, RPG, adventure
Now playing: Psychonauts
Favorite Villain: Meteor (Maniac Mansion)



Michael Hobbs
Art Director

A gamer since Space Invaders, Michael has a soft spot for 2D shooters and other games that directly engage the player. Nintendo certainly ranks high on his list of favorite developers, and though recent forays into the world of MMORPGs have rather consumed him, he'll always have time for a game of Bangoio.

Favorite genres: Action, racing, adventure, alternative, shooters
Now playing: Hot Shots Golf: OT
Favorite Villain: King Bowser (Super Mario Bros.)

play magazine

GAME of the MONTH

072

Conker: Live and Reloaded

Unique, foul and completely brilliant, not only is Conker one of the most remarkable platformers ever, it's also got a deep multiplayer component and arguably the best visuals on console.

Rating System

Our scores represent both a game's technical merits and our personal opinions based on our expertise within each genre, of which the numbers alone do not necessarily tell the whole story. A perfect 10 represents a game that is flawless in the reviewer's opinion. Such a high standard means that 10s will be incredibly rare, but when it happens, it symbolizes that this game isn't just the very best—it's the best of the best.

- 10 Perfect
- 9 Extraordinary
- 8 Great
- 7 Good
- 6 Decent
- 5 Average
- 4 Below average
- 3 Poor
- 2 Bad
- 1 Terrible

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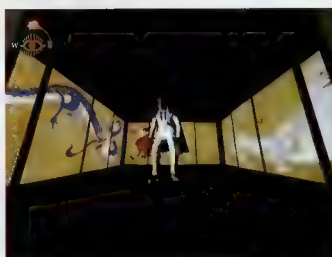
Killer

Don't call it strange, call it...well, OK, call it strange

If you require familiarity and straightforward design in your games, don't play Killer 7. If you require a bright spirit and comfortable imagery in your games, don't play Killer 7. If you want something that's just plain abnormal and, above anything else, daringly original, go ahead and take the wild mind-trip that is Killer 7.

The game tells the story of the Killer 7, a band of assassins who are actually the fractured personalities of a singular killer. The world order is unstable, caught up in terrorist activities spearheaded by a group called Heaven's Smile, who are walking time bombs with no other agenda than to go on suicide runs against anyone in their path. Various interconnected leaders jump in and out of the picture, complicating the already complex web of vendettas and global dominance.

Or something like that. There's not so much of a structured narrative as there's all sorts of pockets of deliriously strange goings on, which basically comes down to bizarre confrontations with bizarre entities that allude to being somehow related but essentially come down to platforms for free-form philosophizing and phantasmagoric imagery.



"...you are simply grateful to be experiencing something so audaciously crafted."



Get it? Yeah, well, you don't get Killer 7 until you play Killer 7, and then you might want to go back and play it again to see if there really was any greater overarching point to all the big tonal shifts and loose threads of dialogue. There will be people who hate this game, and there will be those like myself who find it mesmerizing and a thrill to uncover.

Individual sections play brilliantly well on their own, but not everything about the game necessarily works as a brilliant whole. Killer 7 is the work of game designers giving the finger to convention, and when it's on, there is a sense of mad genius, and when it's off, you are simply grateful to be experiencing something so audaciously crafted.

The engaging action in the game is more like a self-contained shooting gallery, with enemy movement defined on a straight line, drawing you in with confrontations that require stationary targeting. You can only move up and down a predefined path, by pushing the A button for forward, the B button to flip around for the opposite way. The enemy gives up

The maid directs you to the TV, where you can check out the skills of your characters...



blood in volume according to what vital organ you spot: take off a head, blast off an arm, hit the glowing sweet spot they all contain and it's lights out. Build up a sort of combo chain and you get even more blood, which you can take back to a doctor who lives inside a TV and prepare serum to power up your killer of choice.

The set pieces in Killer 7 are stylishly arresting and hypnotic in their originality. The game could be called an interactive movie, a melding of graphic novel and anime and game, which the designers were certainly inspired by all. The craft behind Killer 7 is incredible, structuring a game that makes me feel like I'm playing Snatcher for the newer, warped generation. Vile and bizarre, refreshing and absorbing, Killer 7 is an aggressive blessing to cleanse us from the masses.

Brady Fiechter

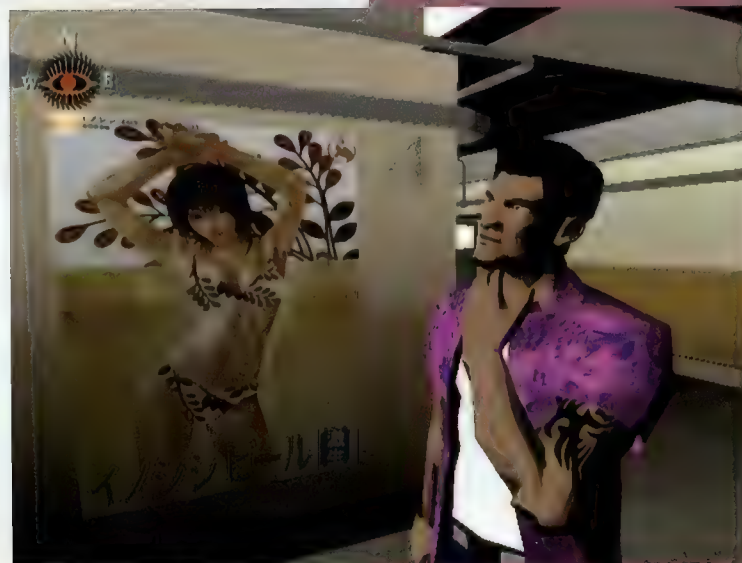
Killer 7 **9.0**
 PlayStation 2, GameCube **Score**

- Awesome visions, fantastic use of sound and music, involving action and entertaining dialogue...
- Some will balk at the mechanical puzzles, but I like their integration within the world.

Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom
 Online: None Available: N/A



Mr. Smith may be a killer for hire, but he can still stop to admire the scenery.



CONKER LIVE AND RELOADED

I came, I saw, I Conkered

If you never played Conker's Bad Fur Day on N64, boy, did you miss out. Rare's epic platformer was a game of the highest caliber, honoring the gameplay legacy of great platformers of the past while simultaneously crapping in the face of tradition—the most obvious example being Conker himself: a cute, furry critter protagonist who swore like a sailor, had a weakness for all things female and was likely to get completely sodding drunk and start vomiting on his enemies. It went directly against what we expected from a platform game, and the genre was all the better for it. Sadly, the N64 version didn't exactly break sales records, but lucky for us, Microsoft seems to believe in second chances. After a long wait, Conker is back...and, yes, better than ever.

Conker's single-player mode is a platformer that's not bound by inhibitions. Everything's possible—as long as it's entertaining—and nothing is sacred. You'll urinate on fire demons; you'll battle a robotic redneck bale of hay with a *Terminator* complex; you'll chomp chunks out of a giant caveman's ass; you'll fly around and crap on angry villagers; you'll ride bareback on an infuriated bull to make heifers explode after giving them massive diarrhea. You'll do all this amidst classic platforming action and explosive shooting, along with mainstays like swimming (albeit through foul septic waste), racing on jetboards and engaging in the standard help-the-poor-sap fetch quests...only your reward will be cash, or possibly getting to jump on a living sunflower's massive breasts. Parody abounds, with references to *Star Wars*, *Aliens*, *Saving Private Ryan* and more; the *Matrix* parody could arguably be the best part of the game. And unlike some games, the humor found here is actually damn funny. Perhaps best of all though: no collect-a-thon gameplay, often the Achilles' heel of platform games.

Of course, it doesn't hurt that everything

in the game looks fan-f@#ling-tastic. This is quite possibly the most visually impressive game I've ever seen. The fur effect on Conker himself (and a few other select characters) is just staggering—it looks like you could reach in and touch it—and the water effects are almost as impressive. Every aspect of the environments boasts high-res textures and crazy attention to detail, while characters are so well modeled and animated with such life that your eyes will barely believe you're looking at a video game. As wrong as it sounds, you haven't lived as a gamer until you've climbed a mountain of beautifully bump-mapped poo and then battled the graphically mesmerizing turd beast within. And all of this is without any refresh rate problems and rarely a drop in frame rate.

For fans of the N64 version, it's worth noting that there have been a few changes to the game, but nothing major. The intro level has been modified a bit so Conker winds up with a baseball bat instead of a frying pan as his weapon of choice; new enemies have been added to up the action quotient a bit, including a minor boss in the It's War chapter; Conker now enjoys *Van Helsing* attire and a new sphincter-cam in the Spooky stage; and various difficulty tweaks have been made throughout. Strangely, some of the language has actually been censored (like in the Great Mighty Poo's lovely ballad), but hopefully there's some way to turn that off.

The single-player mode, however, is only half of the Conker experience. Rare has obviously spent a great deal of time crafting the Live half of Live & Reloaded, and the result is an incredibly deep, extensive multiplayer campaign that picks up the story—at least, that of the Squirrel army battling the Tediz—right where the single-player mode leaves off. The eight substantial maps are each designed



"As wrong as it sounds, you haven't lived as a gamer until you've climbed a mountain of beautifully bump-mapped poo and then battled the graphically mesmerizing turd beast within."



"...it doesn't hurt that everything in the game looks fan-f@#ling-tastic. This is quite possibly the most visually impressive game I've ever seen."

for specific types of mission-oriented gameplay, with objectives built upon standbys like king of the hill and capture the flag or focused on more straightforward search-and-destroy campaigns, with the Squirrels on offense and the Tediz on defense.

Six selectable character types, each with multiple unique skills, provide further depth and layers of strategy. Each class has a role—Sneekers for close-range carnage, Grunts for cover fire, Thermophiles for clearing an area, Skyjockeys for air support—and working as a unit to complement each other's skills is a must unless you want to be turned into so many bloody chunks. A cohesive narrative



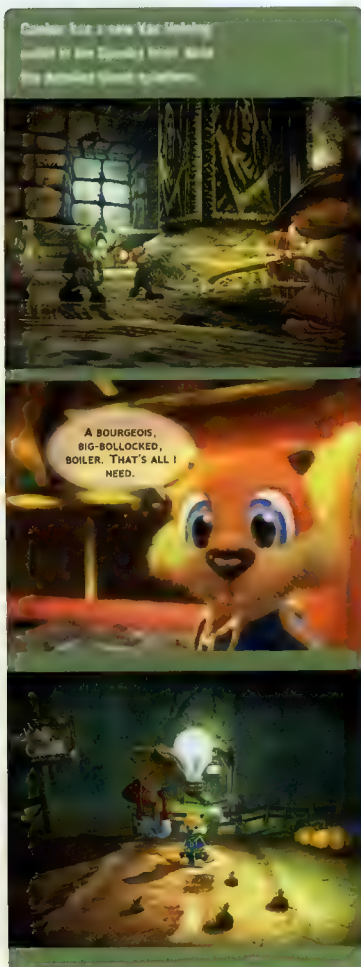
(complete with cutscenes) gives the multiplayer aspects a much more significant feel than traditional multiplayer modes, and even if you're not the type to go online, you can play the missions in a solo mode or in split-screen co-op or versus. This is multiplayer that covers all bases and is designed with the veteran player in mind, which may be the mode's one noteworthy flaw: it's not very friendly to newcomers. Some sort of substantial training mode would have been nice.

Whether you immerse yourself in multiplayer or stick to reliving the single-player experience, Conker: Live and Reloaded is a rude, bloody, puke-soaked blast. With the Xbox 360 around the corner,

Microsoft's first-party offerings seem to be dwindling quickly for the original Xbox, but now that we've got Conker, who can complain? It's a great way to go out.

Chris Hoffman

Conker: Live and Reloaded		9.0
Xbox		Score
<p>Amazing visuals; varied gameplay, absolutely hilarious. Great single-player and multiplayer modes.</p>		
<p>New single-player content would have been nice. The loading is noticeable.</p>		
<p>Developer: Rare Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios</p>		
<p>Online: 16p team warfare Available: June</p>		





For Glyphx Games to attempt a Halo-scope epic in less time and on a fraction of the budget for their first game was, to say the least, ambitious, if not an iota suicidal—almost on par with finding a publisher open-minded enough to finance and publish it—a feat in itself for any epic-scale original idea these days. Meeting with the game's visionaries Gerald and Donald Mustard (for our December 2003 cover story) after they accomplished just that, their passion was so resolute they seemed ready to will Advent into fruition if they had to—zeal that indubitably resonated with Majesco, one of a handful of publishers grounded on the principle of mixing original new games, choice movie-based games and enthusiast properties that feed the most avid gamers, resulting in one of the most compelling stables in all of gaming. This was a big gamble though. Passion can quickly turn to frustration in the developer's space as teams scurry to squeeze three years of content into two, working with (gulp) an outside producer

brought in *after* the advent of the project. Donald fought tooth and nail to get his vision burned onto a DVD, pulling his oft-times reluctant publisher along for the ride, until somehow, through the rigors of compromise, Glyphx wrought their vision load-free out of the tired, sputtering Unreal engine. At 90 days and counting, the game still needed mega-tweaking, but when all is said and done, a few rough edges aside, Advent Rising is gaming's latest and most promising future epic.

Advent Rising begins as humanity, long cast into space, makes its first contact with an alien race (the peaceful,

presumably *Abyss*-inspired Aurelians) who worship them as gods—pomp that's short-lived as they soon learn that the species the Aurelians have come to warn them about, the Seekers (a vile race led by militant six-limbed beasts), who have been systematically slaughtering them throughout the galaxy, have homed in on a rogue transmission, sealing their doom as a species. Their moment of glory now dashed, the boarding party—including the officers chosen to accompany Ambassador Ethan Wyatt and his little brother Gideon—make for home with the news that humanity has approximately two

“...a few rough edges aside, Advent Rising is gaming's latest and most promising future epic.”



days until complete annihilation; but as their shuttle departs, the Seekers emerge from hyperspace and the struggle for survival begins... Why do the Seekers hunt humans? What threat can they possibly pose to such powerful creatures...and why do they scan them before each kill? Mere chum for what is soon to be considered one of the best-written and -scripted space operas gaming has ever seen.

From the moment you assume control in Advent—which is itself a first—through the entire opening sequence (which ends with a dramatic, pivotal choice), the fact that Orson Scott Card wrote the script is glaringly evident and accompanied by superb voice acting supported by surprisingly emotive characters.

The gameplay itself is pretty original too, especially beyond the mid-way point. Like Halo, you can pick up and equip weapons on the run by pressing the corresponding (X, left; Y, right) button to double-wield a variety of arms; however, targeting is handled via Glyphx's proprietary "flick-targeting," where flicking the right analog locks you onto the corresponding enemy until you either flick off or release by clicking the left analog. This gives Gideon total freedom to maneuver, shoot or melee attack, reacting physically in concert with a given enemy's movements. The system—a key factor in delivering Donald's ultimate goal of evolving Gideon from a man into a god—is almost instantly intuitive, and although it does tend to hang up now and again, once you're dialed in, you'll wonder why it took so long for someone to develop. Confronted with a room full of varied aggressors and objects such as fallen pillars or wall sections to manipulate, the possibilities for disposal are nearly endless and, more importantly, fun as hell. The name of the game in Advent is action, initially via guns, but ultimately via powers that make the force look like child's play.

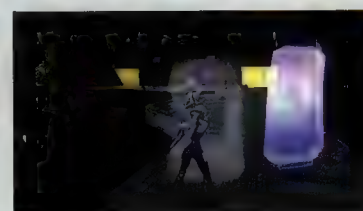
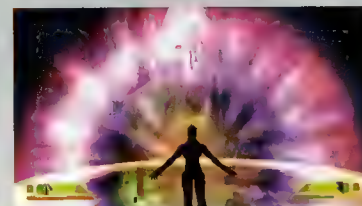
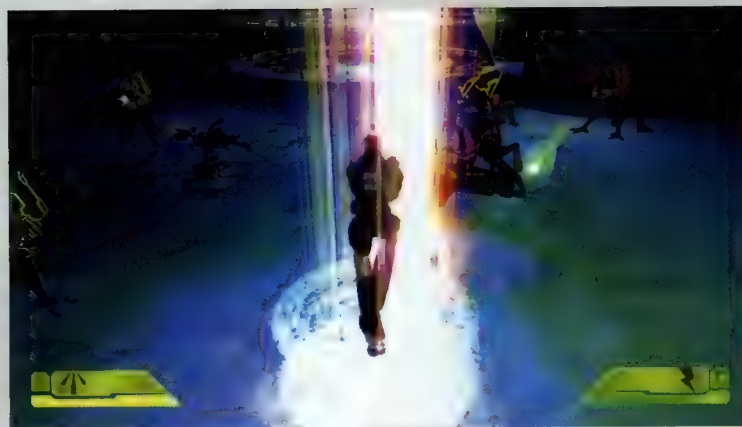
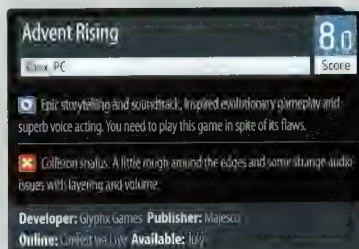
Comparing Advent to Halo is as necessary as it is misleading. Sure, this is an epic space odyssey where you pilot an assault 4x4 and alien hovercraft and defend humanity from an alien menace, but Advent is a more seamless, cinematic experience, taking us from game to cinema within a more constant story arc and less of a "meanwhile..." feel via cutscenes in cadence with the flow of the game.

Advent is also, of course, third-person (yay), which opens things up considerably in terms of a sense of control and expanse, and shares a similar (although I think better) score. Signing Tommy Tallarico Studios to do the audio and soundtrack was a great move, if not the game's saving grace. This may be his best work ever (I still love me some Skeleton Warriors though), and that's saying something.

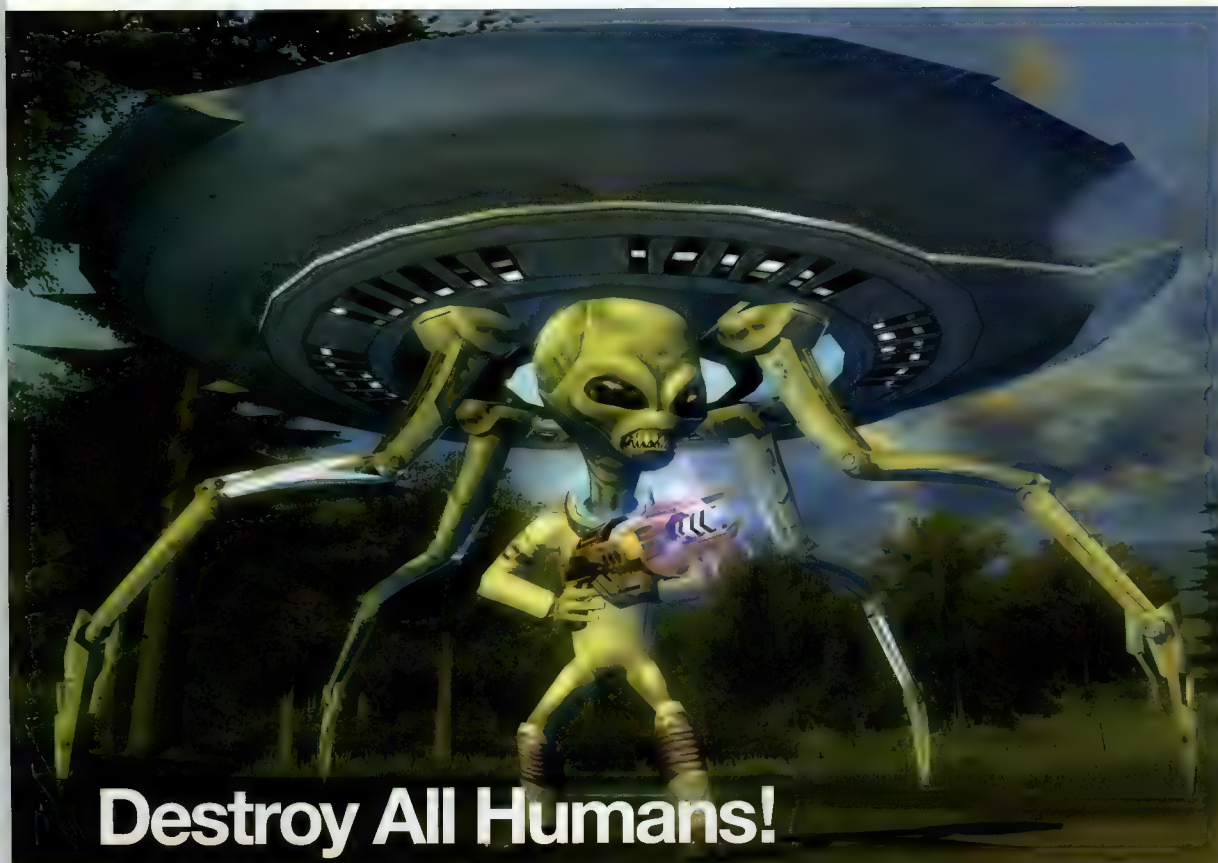
Again, like Halo, Advent is also divided

between organic landscapes, modern cityscapes and massive interiors, although the action is far less tactical. What Advent is sorely lacking is Halo's engine and polish, which are, of course, substantial components. You won't find any normal mapping; buddy characters act erratically; there are more than a few collision snafus; the flick-targeting tends to stick on movable objects when you turn with the right analog; frame rates take annoying hits in peculiar places; and Gideon isn't dynamic to the environments—all indicative of the engine, time and budget constraints and experience (but still puzzling given the simplicity of the textures and the Xbox's power). If this is the trade-off for no loading, I'd have opted for load times, but hey, what other game includes a hidden tribute to Mario? Snafus aside, Advent is still a beautiful game filled with great action, exceptional lighting and solid architecture throughout, not to mention some of the best explosions I've seen in 3D, especially where flying dirt is involved. What Advent lacks in technology and developer prowess (it's their first game), it more than makes up for in design, concept, gameplay and especially story. There's no doubt in my mind that Glyphx is a few key members away from producing a Halo-quality epic. Master Chief is always Master Chief; Gideon becomes a god.

I can't wait to see what happens next. Make sure to pick it up so we can all find out, 360 style. Dave Halverson



Once Lift is mastered to level five, multiple Seekers can be tossed about with ease.



Destroy All Humans!

Anal probe set to maximum

For years, gamers have kicked alien butt all over the galaxy. The situations have been varied, but the result was pretty much the same: in the end, the aliens get the shaft. Well, you know what they say: turnabout is fair play. In *Destroy All Humans!*, you get to be one of the grey-skinned, big-headed bad guys for once, and the result of this fantastic concept is ambitious design that yields some pretty darn good gameplay. Bottom line: being an alien is fun, even if it is a bit rough around the edges.

It's no government secret that *DAH* shares a few things in common with the groundbreaking *Grand Theft Auto* series. To be specific: both games feature expansive environments, both have a wide variety of mission types and plenty of optional side-quests, both offer open-ended gameplay, and both feature plenty of wanton death and destruction (along with increasing levels of resistance as you terrorize the populace). In my opinion, however, *DAH* one-ups *GTA* in the gameplay department; to me, using futuristic weapons like an ion detonator and mental abilities like mind control and especially telekinesis is way cooler than hitting the streets with conventional

"Bottom line: being an alien is fun, even if it is a bit rough around the edges."

weapons, and the violence here, though brutal, is completely tongue-in-cheek. You can't help but chuckle when your alien protagonist, Crypto, gives a citizen an anal probe so powerful that her brain pops out and she collapses in rag-doll fashion; Havok physics, though a bit extreme at times, are put to great use in *DAH*. I also believe that trashing a town in a UFO is more fun than stealing cars, although the transition between on-foot and UFO gameplay isn't as seamless as I'd hoped (thanks to very specific spots where you can land your ship).

As enjoyable as *DAH*'s core gameplay is, there are a few trade-offs. While the environments—which range from the lowly

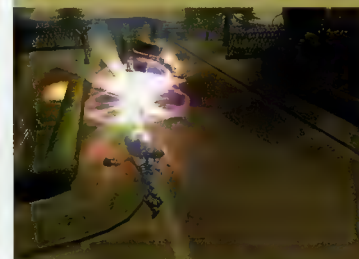
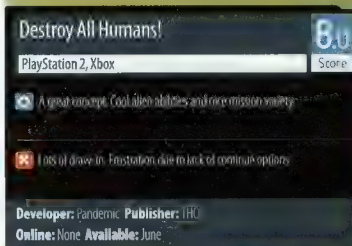
Turnipseed Farm to Area 42 (yes, 42) to the nation's capital—are massive, there's loads of level-of-detail draw-in, sometimes just feet away from the character. The voice work, though good on the whole, can be a bit too goofy; the citizens' innuendo-filled quips grow old fast, and Crypto's Jack Nicholson-sounding voice is just silly. Some design basics were also ignored: there are no mid-mission continues, which can be pretty annoying in long, multi-part missions, and if you die, you get sent back to the mother ship without an option to quickly continue. If you fail a mission for some other reason, you have to manually exit the area and then re-enter to try again.

Though I can't help but think that all of



The environments do a nice job recreating the 1950s.

the game's problems could be addressed in a next-gen sequel, *Destroy All Humans!*, as it stands, is a solid, fun, innovative title. Not bad for a game made by a bunch of dirty humans. Chris Hoffman



AREA 88

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Flipnic

PlayStation 2

Developer: B&B Publisher: THQ Online: No Available: Jan

7.5

Score

Flipnic, without question, is the best thing to happen to video pinball in at least a decade. Instead of just trying to replicate a pinball table, Flipnic does things never possible in the real world, with crazy, winding, interconnected 3D tables and features like boss battles, magnetic gimmickry that challenges your spatial skills, and environments that can be manipulated to open new passageways. The physics feel incredibly natural, and the soothing visuals look better than photorealistic—except for the 8-bit-inspired table, which still looks cool in its own way. Granted, the game can be horribly frustrating and it's still constrained by the fairly simple nature of pinball, but Flipnic sets a new standard nonetheless. Chris Hoffman

Instead of just trying to replicate a pinball table, Flipnic does things never possible in the real world.



Forza Motorsport

Xbox

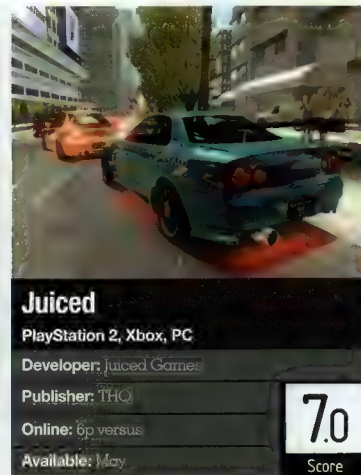
Dev: Microsoft Pub: Microsoft Online: Yes Available: May

9.0

Score

All right, big question first: Is Forza Motorsport better than Gran Turismo 4? Well, at the risk of sounding non-committal, it really depends on what you want. If you want to feel the best physics model and engorge yourself on cars and car models, then stick with GT4. However, if you just want a bit of that but also online play, then Forza is it. The online play here is very good, with all the options you would want, including car trading and class-based racing. And even if it's no match for GT4 on the limit, Forza plays very nicely and I was frankly amazed at how into the online racing I became. It can be incredibly intense at times. Michael Hobbs

The online play here is very good, with all the options you would want, including car trading and class-based racing.



Juiced

PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC

Developer: Juiced Games

Publisher: THQ

Online: 6p versus

Available: May

7.0

Score

THQ really put Juiced through the wringer in transitioning it from its state of readiness circa the now defunct Acclaim to its current status as a formidable contender with the cream of the urban racing crop. Personally, I consider the "street" elements and everything that goes with them an annoyance, but thankfully, Juiced succeeds as a circuit racer in spite of its urban shell, through depth like six-player multi-mode online, extensive customization that translates well to the track, solid track design, accurate physics and excellent visuals. These are available in many flavors, but if you're so inclined to prowls the mean streets for pinks, Juiced certainly deserves your registration. DH



Arc the Lad: End of Darkness

PlayStation 2

Developer: Core Design

Publisher: Warner

Online: 2p versus 4p & 8p versus

Available: Jan

7.5

Score

Arc the Lad makes its return to the PS2...but this isn't the Arc the Lad you remember. Most noticeable is the change to the combat system, making EoD more an action-RPG than anything else. Still, the game retains a good RPG-based character development system, and still proves its worth in the rich storyline and huge tip of the hat to veteran Arc the Lad players. Taking place five years after Twilight of the Spirits, EoD holds fast to its roots, allowing you to play as two-dozen familiar characters, including Arc himself. We say change is good. Ashely Esqueda



Cold Winter

PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC

Dev: Swordfish Studios Publisher: VU Games Online: 8p versus Available: May

7.5

Score

Now here was a pleasant surprise... Cold Winter is probably the quietest first-person shooter release in months, and it turns out to be better than most everything outside that one we call Halo 2. I really like the look of the game, with its rich color palette and vivid lighting, and the presentation is top-notch. The voice acting is excellent, keeping a rather involving story pushing nicely forward. High praise goes for the sound and enemy death animations too, along with a fun but underdeveloped physics model. So much to like about the game in its basic, well-crafted form, other than the big mistake: the game controls like you're on a unicycle. What's up with that delayed momentum-based movement? Brady Fiechter

"I really like the look of the game, with its rich color palette and vivid lighting, and the presentation is top-notch."



Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

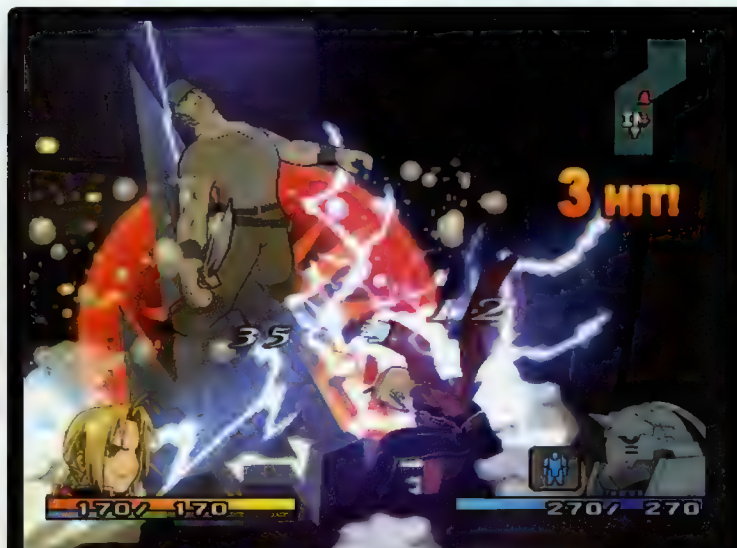
PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC

Dev: The Collective Pub: LucasArts Online: None Available: May

6.5

Score

I didn't play RotS before the movie came out so I could avoid spoilers, but they stunted the story so much that it's almost unrecognizable. Granted, I know people dislike plot spoilers for games like this, but that's no excuse to chop up a great story. Graphically, RotS shines...wielding a lightsaber has never been more glorious. However, when you're wielding that saber and can only do the same few attacks over and over again, the game gets repetitive. Disappointingly, Obi-Wan and Anakin control exactly the same, and the game's a tad short for my taste, although if you're looking for pure action, RotS is the way to go. Fisticuffs are always more exciting when you throw a couple lightsabers into the mix. Ashley Esqueda



FullMetal Alchemist 2: Curse of the Crimson Elixir

PlayStation 2

Developer: Paquin Publisher: Square Enix Online: None Available: July

7.0

Score

For FMA fans looking for the ultimate polymorphic experience, FMA 2 is a double-edged sword. While it's more in sync with the whole of the series—the new manga-shaded visuals are another big improvement—as a stand-alone action-adventure it still comes across as somewhat conventional overall. At its heart, this is a clear-area-solve-routine-puzzle-fight-boss-repeat-type proposition that oft times has you milling about in the same area for far too long. The simple-to-master alchemic transmuting of weapons and using bonus points to build Al and Ed's abilities remains mostly the same, and, of course, the story elements are pulled directly from the stellar anime series, but overall I think the game would have benefited from being based on the anime rather than distilled directly from it. D. Halverson



"the new manga-shaded visuals are another big improvement."

Review

Guild Wars

Delivers everything that was promised

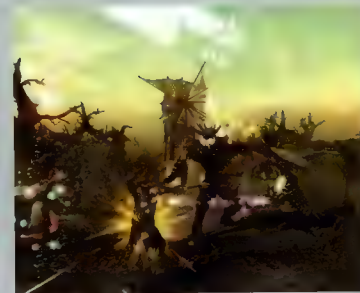
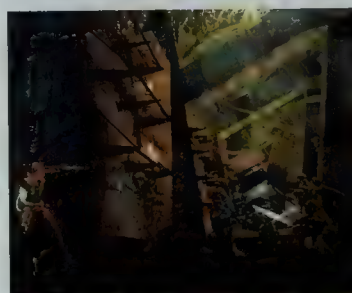
Last month we closed the issue just as Guild Wars went live, so it wasn't possible to commit to a definitive score. Since that time, GW has enjoyed enormous worldwide success, ending World of Warcraft's reign atop the charts. This review is for everyone that decided to pass up Guild Wars; you don't need to be an experienced MMO player to have fun with this game, and you don't need a beast of a PC to run the game smoothly. If you enjoy action-RPGs in general, there's a very good chance you'll like Guild Wars. And for a one-time purchase—remember, there's no subscription fee to play—Guild Wars offers a huge amount of great content.

If, for some strange reason, one decides to treat Guild Wars as a single-player RPG, running through the entire story-driven campaign using NPC henchmen with no intention of pursuing multiplayer possibilities, the experience will still provide 70 to 80 hours of quality gameplay. The main quest is massive, featuring an epic tale that unfolds in a satisfying sequential string of events. Major town hubs are linked together by large outdoor exploration areas, each containing several side-quests and opportunities for item collection. Alternately, by completing the main outpost missions, the game will advance you to the next major world hub—skipping exploration almost entirely. After visiting a major hub, that region can then be accessed instantly,

repeatedly, anywhere and anytime, by simply clicking its icon on the main world map. The instanced missions are the heart and soul of Guild Wars' campaign and they are extremely well designed. With primary and bonus objectives to complete, cutscenes, scripted events and some excellent strategic elements, these privately spawned areas have the solid build of a great single-player level but they're absolutely designed to provide a rewarding challenge for group play.

The Guild Wars team frequently references Magic: The Gathering as an analogy for GW's combat, and the deeper you move into the game, the more you realize how accurate the comparison is. Sure, there are hundreds of items and even dyes to add to your character, but playing "dress-up avatar" won't necessarily win the day. The most important decision involves the eight specific powers you load up before leaving town. No power is strictly dominant and everything has a counter. All players can choose a primary and secondary archetype, so, for example, a melee bruiser may simultaneously fulfill the role of healer by choosing a Monk as his secondary profession. A Ranger might pin her foe to the ground with debilitating arrows then tear an undead minion out from the corpse using her Necromancer secondary power. ArenaNet did a spectacular job of designing and integrating all the skills here, resulting in one of the most varied and strategically

"...you don't need to be an experienced MMO player to have fun with this game, and you don't need a beast of a PC to run the game smoothly."



diverse online RPGs available. Also bear in mind that however complex the combination, the actual flow of combat is frenetic: a non-stop stream of movement, targeting, execution and reaction.

These excellent gameplay nuances may require proper hands-on examination to truly appreciate, but there's one surface element easily perceived at a glance and that's Guild Wars' gorgeous visuals. With its excellent world design, superb effects, deep colors and soft blooms, Guild Wars delivers a striking presentation. Jeremy Soule's subtle symphonic score complements the sophisticated high-fantasy imagery with spacious ethereal themes.

All told, ArenaNet has crafted a top-

tier online RPG espousing many of the best elements of the genre while soundly eliminating the tedious and mundane. And in terms of pure value, Guild Wars currently provides more bang for the buck than anything else on PC. **Mike Griffin**

Guild Wars

9.0

Score

PC

Huge variety of character builds, frequent updates and no monthly fee.

World collision is a little too obstructive and linear in certain areas.

Developer: ArenaNet

Publisher: NCsoft

Online: Massively multiplayer

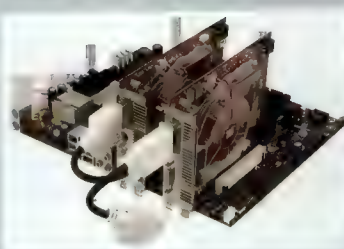
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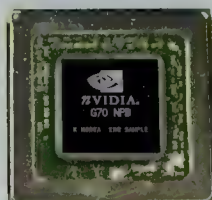
Postscript

ATI introduces their proposed SLI-killer: Crossfire

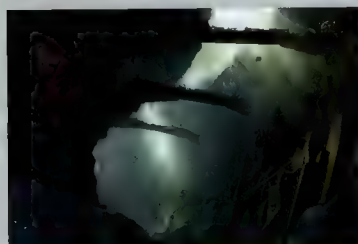
Though Alan Wake and Prey were both reportedly running on systems with new ATI hardware under the hood, ATI and Nvidia nixed their plans to publicly reveal new consumer graphics hardware at E3. This was likely to avoid pulling the spotlight away from their lucrative partnerships with next-gen consoles. In the weeks following E3, however, new hardware turned up from ATI at Taiwan's biggest PC expo, Computex 2005, when they introduced their multi-GPU solution: Crossfire. Where Nvidia's SLI bridges two cards together across the PCI Express slots, the Crossfire solution uses a rear case dongle similar to the old-school Voodoo SLI. Users will need a Crossfire-enabled "Master" card coupled with a regular card they may already own—all within the Radeon X800 model line. Performance between Crossfire and SLI systems is quite similar—likely within 10 percent of each other at the high end—but ATI's solution seems to one-up Nvidia for compatibility. Even in older titles that are primarily CPU-dependant, where Nvidia's SLI usually flips down



to single-card mode, Crossfire will allow users to crank out some insane anti-aliasing (up to a whopping x14) through both cards. That's some serious reduction of jagged lines in any 3D title. Nvidia is planning to reveal their GeForce 6800 successor—spotted undercover at Computex as the "7800 GTX"—at a mid-June press event. Analysts expect a level of performance that is very similar to the Nvidia RSX GPU inside the PS3.



Guild Wars adding free content and PvP features



This summer, Guild Wars players will receive a pleasant addition in the form of free game content. ArenaNet will be launching Sorrow's Furnace, a massive new explorable environment located far below the Shiverpeak Mountains. This vast two-part subterranean mine area will be one of the game's largest dungeons, "much larger" than the Catacombs in



the early part of the game, according to ArenaNet co-founder Jeff Strain. Sorrow's Furnace will also set the stage for Guild Wars' upcoming Chapter 2 expansion, delving into the conflict between the dwarven nations and the savage centaur clans. So that's the campaign portion of the game receiving many hours of new gameplay, and ArenaNet also has ambitious plans for PvP. They'll be adding a new Observer mode so players can watch championship matches between elite guilds first hand, in real-time. Individual players can be selected and tracked in the battle from various angles. And if your guild needs you for a big fight, you'll be able to abandon your adventure and jump right into the battle with a simple click inside the guild interface. With the ultimate goal of positioning Guild Wars as the definitive E-Sport, ArenaNet is also looking into sports broadcast-style animated effects and text for the Observer mode.

NPD PC Game Sales

Week of May 15 - May 21

01. Guild Wars - NCsoft
02. The Sims 2 University - EA
03. World of Warcraft - VU Games
04. The Sims 2 - EA
05. Empire Earth 2 - VU Games
06. Lego Star Wars - Eidos
07. Stronghold 2 - 2K Games (Take 2)
08. The Sims Deluxe - EA
09. Half-Life 2 - VU Games
10. Doom 3 - Activision

The Death of Morpheus



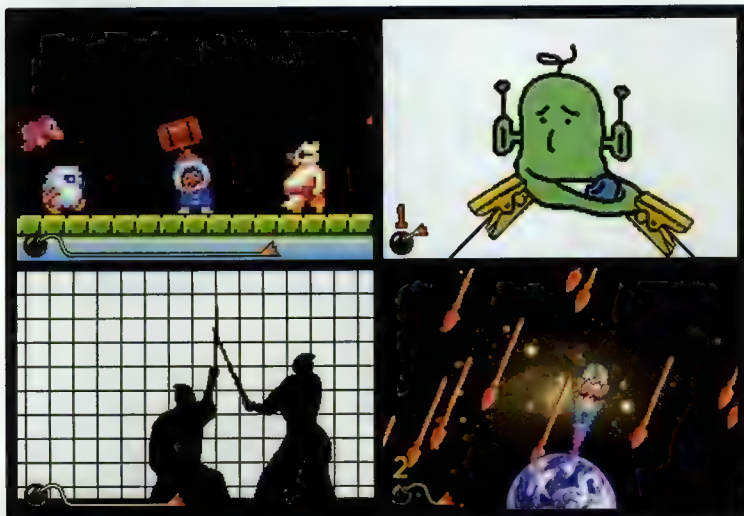
That's right, the beloved Morpheus is dead, kaput, toast, over like a four-leaf clover. During the recent "Hunt for Morpheus" live event across The Matrix Online servers, the first apostle of Neo was on a rampage in his obsessive search for The One's remains. He started setting off virus-bombs at various locations around the MegaCity, warning the Machines it would only get worse if they didn't return Neo's body. The very fabric of the Matrix began to waver during these attacks and the Machines panicked. They released the Assassin into the Matrix, sent to eliminate Morpheus. As he planted

a final virus bomb, Morpheus spotted a fly buzzing around the area—eventually revealing the porcelain-masked Assassin. The captain of the Nebuchadnezzar was able to dodge some bullets and flee down an alleyway, but the Assassin altered the rules of the Matrix to catch up to Morpheus—finally putting him down in an ambush of wild gunfire. So is he, you know, *really* dead? That's the big mystery following the cliffhanger cinematic that capped off the latest MxO live event. The next phase of mission content will allow players to pursue the truth.

Origin of the Species

Several ex-staff from Core, Sega, Lionhead, Square Enix and Rare have banded together to form Nu Generation Games. They've developed a new AI engine license based on genetic technology called GenTek, designed to exploit the multiple cores of next-gen systems. Nu Generation believes that following a minor AI breakthrough in the late '90s, developers have been so wrapped up in physics and graphics that AI has taken a back seat. Their first game, action-adventure title Origin of the Species, will implement GenTek AI (scaled down to current-generation hardware) for its enemy behavior. Origin of the Species will hit PCs in September with Tri-Synergy publishing. At E3, Nu Generation Development Director Nick Bamford revealed that Xbox, PS2 and PSP versions of Origin of the Species are well into production, though currently unsigned for North American release.





Game Boy Advance

Score

Developer: Nintendo/Intelligent Systems **Publisher:** Nintendo **Multiplayer:** None **Available:** May

By now, you probably know the score when it comes to WarioWare: crazy characters, insane storylines, fast action and loads of varied, bizarre micro-games. This installment has all that, but now, with the addition of

a gyrosensor that requires you to actually rotate your GBA to play, it truly lives up to its title and provides plenty of innovative challenges. As always, the games are fun (the NES remixes are again my favorite) and the challenge level is back up to par, but I didn't find spinning the GBA quite as intuitive a mechanic as I would have liked. The gyrosensor didn't always stay calibrated either. I had hours of fun with Twisted anyway, but I prefer Touched or the original. **Chris Hoffman**



Game Boy Advance

Score

Developer: Intelligent Systems **Publisher:** Nintendo **Multiplayer:** 4p versus **Available:** May

If you played the last Fire Emblem, then you pretty much know what to expect from The Sacred Stones: solid, traditional, grid-based strategy-RPG gameplay with a decent array of character classes and a rock-paper-scissors-

style weapon triangle to make things just a little more interesting. The character designs are excellent—Japanese fantasy designs at their best—and the story, though rather typical, is well-told. The Sacred Stones also retains the few Fire Emblem conventions that I'm not too fond of—namely breakable weapons and permanently losing characters who fall in battle—but they're really just mere annoyances. You won't find anything groundbreaking here, but you will find a highly enjoyable strategy game. **Chris Hoffman**



PSP

Score

Developer: Clap Hanz **Publisher:** Sony **Multiplayer:** 8p versus **Available:** May

This was one of my favorite launch titles for the Japanese PSP, and while it hasn't picked up much in the way of enhancements for this domestic version, it's as fun as ever. Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee plays like other games in the series, with a simple and classic interface that nevertheless rewards skillful play and offers up plenty of challenge. The cute, cartoony graphics and neat-looking courses look great on the PSP, though small touches like the



caddies being there in voice only separate it from its PS2 counterparts. No matter, this is a very addictive and good-playing game of golf with sweet wireless matchups and plenty of fun costumes and characters to unlock in between. **Michael Hobbs**



Lunar: Dragon Song

Nintendo DS

Developer: IAM/Game Arts **Publisher:** Ubisoft **Multiplayer:** TBA **Available:** Late Summer 2005

Finally delivering the follow-up to the Sega CD and PlayStation classics, Lunar: Dragon Song (formerly Lunar: Genesis) takes players back to that magical world of Dragon Masters, the goddess Althena and the

beautiful blue star that hangs in the sky. Set prior to the events of the original Lunar, at a time when Beastmen rather than humans were the dominant species, Dragon Song's story parallels the original's in many ways, including a young man, Jian, who's determined to be a hero, his female companion, tentatively named Lucia (no word if Lucia has any relationship to the character from Lunar: Eternal Blue), and a journey into the Frontier. Many original Lunar staff members are developing the game. **CH**



Evil lurks in
the shadows.

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Gunstar Super Heroes

Behind the scenes of this super sequel

Wrapping up three months of exclusive Gunstar Super Heroes coverage, an interview with Treasure CEO Masato Maegawa

Interview

Masato Maegawa, CEO, Treasure

play: First of all, thank you for finally making a Gunstar sequel. The buzz is already building in the U.S. We know it's not your thing, so we're especially appreciative. You know what this means, right? We'll be expecting sequels for Dynamite Headdy, Yuke Yuke Troublemakers, Sin and Punishment... Might you continue down this path? Have you reconsidered your position on making sequels...will you be doing more?

Masato Maegawa: As much as we would like to create sequels for the titles that you mention, we are going to take it one game at a time. Also, to clarify, Treasure does not have a policy in place that limits us from developing sequels. As we continue to staff up, the team will continue to focus on creating new games as well as sequels.

That's great. We always wondered if it was "policy" or not always moving ahead. Did you consider any other titles or decide immediately to go with the two Heroes games?

It didn't take long to decide to create both.

Speaking of Sin and Punishment, here's one of the best 3D games ever created, yet it's never appeared in the States. Ever consider bringing it to DS or PSP?

There is no plan to release it in the U.S. at this time; however, we have localized it.

How much of the original Gunstar Heroes team worked on Gunstar Super Heroes?

There were seven staff members who worked on the original Gunstar Heroes, including myself, and six of the original seven are working on Gunstar Super Heroes.

Has Treasure pretty much stayed the same staff-wise through the years?

We are lucky that Treasure has not seen much turnover. The majority of the core employees are still here.

Gunstar Heroes raised the bar for 2D action and 16-bit across the boards, standing as one of the best 16-bit

games ever created. You pioneered massive animated explosions, super-fast gameplay and all kinds of never-before-seen special effects. What new advances has the Game Boy Advance hardware allowed you to explore so that Super Heroes might have a similar impact on mobile gaming?

Due to limited hardware specs on the Game Boy Advance, Treasure has had to be extremely creative at finding ways to push our technology. This in turn, however, has allowed us to explore new ways to ensure that Super Heroes will be a success for mobile gaming. We are certain that players will be surprised.

Have you considered creating an enhanced version of Gunstar Super Heroes for PSP, or are you working exclusively on Nintendo hardware at present? Wario World was spectacular by the way; thanks for that one too.

We are not working exclusively with Nintendo. For Gunstar Super Heroes, it was a matter of selecting the hardware that was easiest to work with for this particular game. It was never our intention to create the game completely in 3D, so it made sense to choose the GBA because of the 2D action. Glad to hear you liked Wario World!

We thought for a while there Treasure would become a Nintendo studio. All these years you've remained independent, yet you're one of the most talented and innovative game studios in the world. Have many companies approached you to work with them exclusively or to acquire you?

Our company is independent, and I plan on keeping it that way. My thoughts are this: if we were to build exclusivity with one company, the width and deepness of our titles would be limited, and that is something that I don't want to risk.

As in the original, Red can get in on the action too





"There are fewer competitors developing for this particular genre, so it allows us a chance to extend our sales reach."

Masato Maegawa, CEO, Treasure

You're in a rare but much appreciated class. So, did Sega commission you to develop Gunstar Super Heroes or did you begin the development and then shop for a publisher? It's certainly nice to see the two names together again.

We have developed for the past year and a half at our own risk. Of course, at the same time, we have been in discussions with Sega. Then last year, it was decided that Sega would be our publisher.

Treasure is known for amazing shooters and 3D, but most of all for making the world's best 2D action games. Have you ever considered making a 2D game on a next-gen console?

Of course we would love to create a 2D game on a next-gen console, but that is a difficult decision to make. Right now, it seems more reasonable to develop on the GBA.

I see; is it difficult to advance 3D game design because so much effort is required to stay on top of graphics technology?

Regarding 3D action or 3D shooting games, it is more difficult to create game design structure than the technical aspects. In contrast to RPGs, simply creating an action

or shooting game in 3D would result in lesser game quality versus 2D. To avoid this, we have to make a system-wise game structure that works even in 3D, like in Sin and Punishment or Ikaruga. We'd have to find a way to maintain the game quality in 3D while retaining the 2D gameplay.

Well put. So, do you expect to release more portable than console games over the next few years?

It is a small company, so I think two titles a year is our current goal, but we are looking to continue developing for the handheld market.

How will you deal with the coming complexity and cost of developing for the next generation of home consoles? How will it affect the type of games that you make on console?

When deciding to create for next-gen, we must factor in the complexity, cost and hardware—what's easier to develop. All of these factors will affect the types of games we make in the future, but they will not affect the quality.

Can the traditional shooter market grow, or will it always retain the same fans? This

The GBA doing things only Treasure can make it do.

I think the traditional shooter market will always attract the same fan base; however, it is not far off to say that this could change. There are fewer competitors developing for this particular genre, so it allows us a chance to extend our sales reach.

Hope for the future. What a great idea to include homages to Afterburner, Thunderblade and other classic Mega Drive games in Super, by the way! How did you decide on adding these elements? It was something the developers put in as a bonus feature at the beginning, and after the positive feedback from Sega, we decided to keep it in the game.

What is the percentage breakdown between remixed levels of the original Gunstar and new levels?

The basic flow of levels is similar to the original Gunstar Heroes, but all the levels have been newly rebuilt. Those who have played the original can enjoy the new game with a fresh perspective.

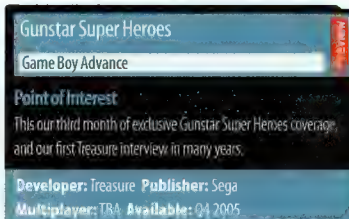
How is it you are able to make the GBA hardware look like so much more? This

game destroys anything else on the machine. How are you able to constantly get more out of hardware?

We've gained experience and learned certain skills from the Family Computer [Famicom]. It can be more fun to explore the technical capabilities within the confines of limited specs than it is to create a game structure with the extended specs of a next-gen console. In my opinion, many companies haven't pushed the effort to maximize their skills on the GBA.

Again, well stated. As always, it's been an honor and a privilege.

We promise to continue to develop 2D titles that fans such as yourself can enjoy. Thank you for your time.

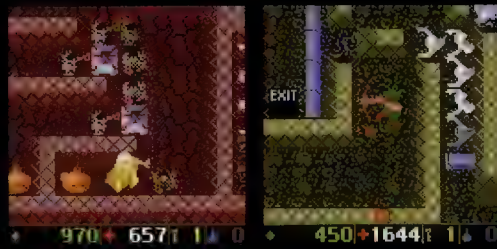


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Gauntlet™

Gauntlet is a classic medieval fantasy adventure game with fast-paced, frenzied arcade action. Make your way through 25 levels of mayhem and magic. Explore dungeons, shoot monsters and loot treasure as Thor the Warrior, Thyra the Valkyrie, Merlin the Wizard or Questor the Elf. With countless enemies, traps, trick walls, teleporters and fake exits, surviving won't be easy!

Publisher: I-play



V-Girl™

V-girl lets you download an artificial girlfriend and woo her on a 3G mobile handset. This award-winning 3G mobile Java application presents intelligent, animated 3-D characters who live in a virtual mobile world. All you need to do is push the right buttons—literally. Send your girlfriend messages, ask what she is doing, even flirt with her. Shower her with gifts, paying with real money. But treat her wrong or forget an anniversary and you'll get the cold shoulder!

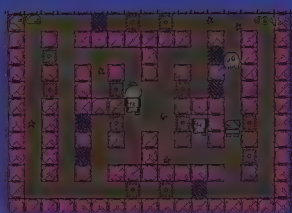
Publisher: Artificial Life, Inc.

Desktop Adventures

Mr. Howpit and the Mysterious Maze

Collect all stars in an ever-changing maze while avoiding the evil monsters. The maze has three different kinds of doors. Moving through a door closes one kind and opens another.

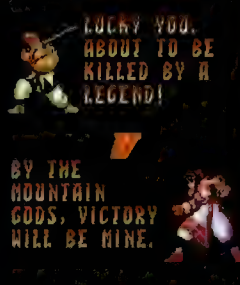
Publisher: vredungmand



Samurai Shodown

Evil is sweeping the land in Samurai Shodown, an arcade beat-em-up with weapon-on-weapon fighting. Train and hone your skills for battle against the evil within your samurai self now manifesting physically and wreaking havoc across the land. Only by defeating your evil self in battle can you control the power of the samurai and save the honor of the world!

Publisher: I-play



Galleon™ Dusk

Galleon: Dusk brings you a second helping of action and adventure with Rhama Sabrier. Be prepared for another rollercoaster ride of shooting, sword fighting, hand-to-hand combat and mind-bending puzzles from the creator of Lara Croft. This sequel to the hugely successful Galleon™: Dawn features three levels of unrivaled platform action with swimming, climbing, jumping, falling and pick-ups galore.

Publisher: I-play



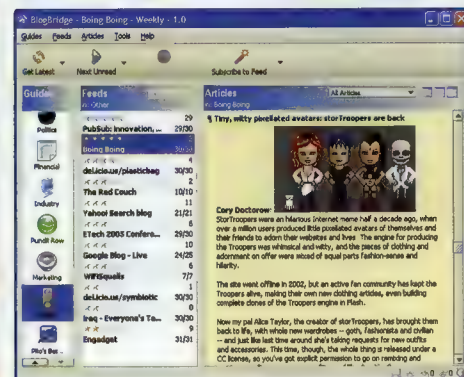
Spacerace to Timbuktu

Classic space shooter inspired by great games such as Arcadia, Galaga and Xenon. The object of the game is to control your spaceship on its flight to the faraway star colony Timbuktu. Fire your cannons aggressively and move bold and deceptively, then you might just stay alive long enough to join the universe-wide hall of fame. Space just ain't no friendly place at this time of year. Kill what you can and avoid the rest. Watch out for shield and weapon bonuses...and above all: stay alive.

Publisher: vredungmand

Tech Center

BlogBridge



Developed using Java technology, BlogBridge is designed for the non-technical user (techies love it too!) to discover, read, follow and skim news feeds, blogs and other data feeds simultaneously. Sure it comes with an RSS reader, but it also comes with a server-based service that packs a ton of value. Want to synchronize news feeds between different computers? Want to discover new feeds based on interest or history? Want a recommendation rating for a new feed? In a hurry and need to scan only what's most important? BlogBridge does it all!

Publisher: BlogBridge

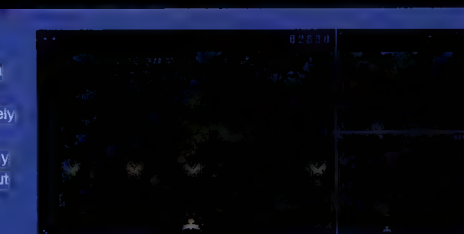
Killer Desktop App

AirportMonitor



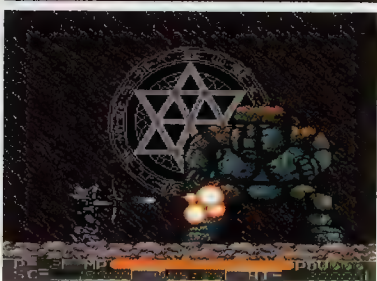
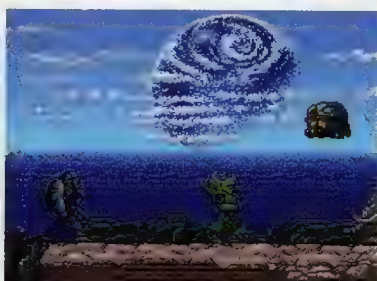
AirportMonitor is a dynamic, interactive display of air traffic and flight information available on many airport Web sites. AirportMonitor tracks flights from approximately 100 miles from the terminal right down to the runway. View information such as flight origin, destination, aircraft type, altitude, and flight ID. AirportMonitor has a 10-minute delay and filtered information for security purposes, but replays with full flight information are available for the previous three months.

Publisher: Passur



Sell by date: infinity

Look at those lovely highly detailed 16-bit characters and backgrounds. If only the current systems could do that!



Madouou Granzort

Super side scroller

System: SuperGrafx Developer: Hudson Publisher: Hudson Released: 1990

Back in the early '90s, when import gaming was practically an underground movement (and indescribably special), only the most elite (and poor afterwards) gamers owned and operated an NEC SuperGrafx. Operating at a blazing 7.16 MHz, displaying 512 colors with dual parallax backgrounds and double the sprites of the PC Engine (128), this was one mean and very expensive machine. I paid \$600 dollars for mine and \$100-plus per game and didn't bat an eye. I couldn't eat for a month, but with Aldynes and Granzort HuCards in my possession—which made up nearly half of the games ever released for the thing; 1941, Battle Ace and Ghouls 'n Ghosts rounds out the entire library—it was a small price to pay. Granzort wasn't terribly original for the time—playing a shape-shifting assault suit battling across subterranean ruins, labyrinths and organic strongholds—but was it ever beautiful and extremely well put together. There was also something about the crispness and color

of SuperGrafx games that was truly special, not to mention smooth parallax backgrounds and rich, thumping arcade-quality music and sound effects. Funny thing is that playing it today has the same profound effect on me it did back then. Dave Halverson

"I couldn't eat for a month, but with Aldynes and Granzort HuCards in my possession...it was a small price to pay."

Totally awesome indeed. Just don't show it to Weird Ed...



Maniac Mansion

Don't be a tuna head

System: NES Developer: Lucasfilm Games Publisher: Jaleco Released: 1990

Sentient tentacles roam the hallways, there's a corpse in the shower, one of the occupants is a militant with a hamster fetish, and there's a nuclear reactor in the swimming pool. What else could it be other than Lucasfilm Games' classic Maniac Mansion? A truly bizarre sense of humor—what other game features a week-old roast as one of the items you can obtain?—was only part of Maniac Mansion's winning formula, with the rest of the success mostly attributed to the game's clever puzzles and open-ended gameplay. In addition to the main character, Dave, whose girlfriend was kidnapped by the deranged Dr. Fred, the player got to choose two additional characters from a roster of six at the beginning of the game. Each character had or her own special skills to help survive the perils of the mansion—Razor could befriend the Green Tentacle via their shared love for music, while Bernard could use his scientific knowledge to contact the

Meteor Police—which led to a different experience (and perhaps ending) depending on the characters selected, yielding a point-and-click adventure unlike any other. Of course, the NES version of Maniac Mansion didn't come first, but it may be the best; the redesigned characters and restricted animation arguably make the console version even more endearing than the PC original. Chris Hoffman

"A truly bizarre sense of humor...was only part of Maniac Mansion's winning formula..."



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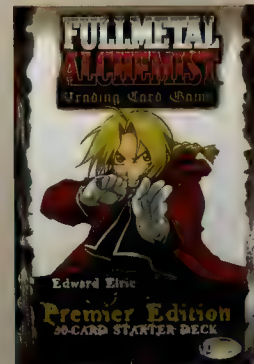
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Full Metal Panic Fumoffu

Major monkey business

Following in the footsteps (...tank tracks, mecha fumes...) of *Full Metal Panic*, any imminent threat has well passed—basically, things are as peaceful as they can possibly get—but that doesn't change the fact that Kaname is still one of the "Whispered" and therefore under constant military protection courtesy of everyone's favorite military madman, Sousuke, whose paranoia *always* gets the best of him at the expense of anyone or thing within range...along with Kaname, of course. A letter left in his locker...remedied by a plastic explosive; long lunch line...nothing a little gunplay can't solve. Basically, the guy is a complete sausage. He plays arcade games with a real gun, is a complete menace to society, and twists even the most mundane pedestrian happenstance into a full-blown conspiracy. Luckily his superiors are quick with the generous donations and clever cover-ups, cleaning up his massive messes with a resounding ka-ching! Where *Full Metal Panic* used the high school love/hate comedy as a catalyst for the heavy action and adventure, *Fumoffu* never strays, while magnifying it substantially for maximum comedy relief; and do they ever nail it. This is easily the best comedy series to come along since *FLCL* or *Abenobashi Magical*

Shopping Arcade—ultra-polished with slick animation and an ultra-crisp transfer, not to mention deft localization by ADV's resident ADR master Don Rush. Funny, sexy and highly explosive; do not, under any circumstances, miss it.
Dave Halverson

Full Metal Panic Fumoffu		9.5
Volume: 1		Score
<p>Funny, sexy, kooky, ultra-polished action-comedy and anti-romance with lots of stuff blowing up. What's not to love?</p> <p>As if, honestly, series anime just doesn't get much better.</p>		
Released by: ADV Films Rating: TV PG		
Running Time: 75 minutes Available: May		



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"...easily the best comedy series to come along since FLCL..."

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The Melody of Oblivion

Scary monsters torn asunder

Many a great anime series has emerged from the aftermath of a devastating war or Armageddon, but *Melody of Oblivion's* post-traumatic syndrome is somewhat off-kilter. This particular war, a singularly bloody feud between humans and "monsters" ended with the monsters on top, yet society seems all the better and normal for it. However, the thin veil between the populace's almost mechanical complacency and the monsters' invisible reign is beginning to erode... Meanwhile, Bocca—a cool-under-pressure, almost dangerously forthright high school kid (he likes to comment on the state of his pseudo-girlfriend's growing breasts to her face), at odds with his place in the universe and fascinated with becoming a warrior (which is odd given the world is at peace)—is about to get his wish,



"...and the girl, well, she's an enigma wrapped in an enigma."



as seemingly normal circumstances in his life begin to reveal their true form... The strangely dressed drifter he sees everyday sifting through scrap piles; the eccentric old man that toils away in his remote garage; his robotic parents, there to bribe his teachers or whomever else necessary to help him stay as transparent as possible; and the strange and beautiful girl pickpocket Sayoko whose taken to mooching off of him everyday after school all have an agenda. When the king of monsters shows up with an appetite for eating children (and Bocca's lovely "four-eyes" is next on the menu), it all becomes



clear. The old man is the architect of I-bar machines, the motorcycle/ethereal beast hybrids that act as a warrior's impenetrable partner; the drifter, a legendary warrior soon to become his mentor; and the girl, well, she's an enigma wrapped in an enigma. Before you know it, Bocca is a warrior of Melos himself, a magical archer with one mean machine and the ability to see The Melody of Oblivion—a ghostly red-haired girl who appears when monsters are near—fighting for the preservation of humankind against the monsters that would have them for dinner. *Melody of Oblivion* has it all: It's funny, dramatic, haunting, action-packed, polished in every respect and 100 percent traditional animation—a fitting way to celebrate Gainax's 20 years of creating some of the world's best animation. DH

The Melody of Oblivion

Volume: 1 - "Arrangement"

9.0

Score

Traditional setup leads to unique story arc; great pacing.

Localization and production values, plus intriguing characters.

Hard to pick this one apart. I'm not wild about the bus with wings and horse legs. That was kinda broken.

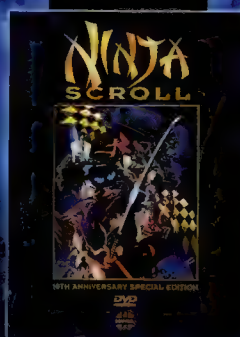
Released by: Geneon Entertainment

Rating: 16 & up

Running Time: 100 minutes

Available: June

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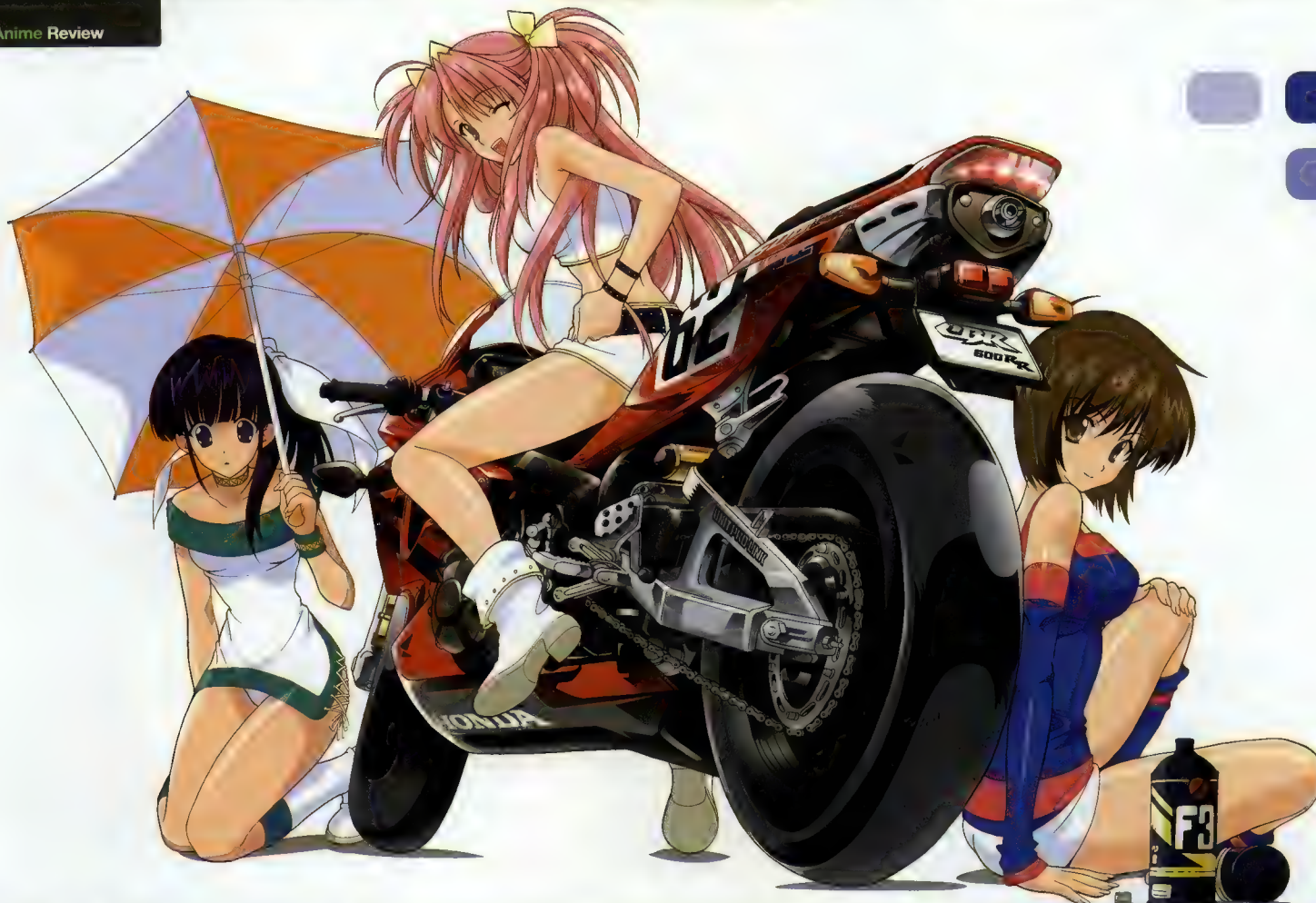
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Girls Bravo

Harems scare 'em

Yukinari Sasaki isn't just a token punk loser; he's gynophobic, as in afraid of girls. So there's no one better to get sucked through a bathtub—well, he's actually kicked in when he walks in on his hot, naked neighbor Kirie, who happens to be borrowing his bathtub—into a parallel universe where men are an endangered species. How do you spell cliché? Well, maybe not. Waiting for him on the other side is the sticky-sweet and ample-breasted Miharu who, after rescuing him from a mob of would-be girl rapists, falls so deeply in love with him she follows him home through the tub into his world where sweet love blossoms...or not. She may be the only girl he's ever been around that doesn't cause him to break out in hives, aka his "girl rash," but things quickly escalate into full-scale debauchery as what looks like yet just another typical prude-meets-harem series wastes no time veering into the completely absurd: Miharu gets stalked by the high school's resident rich pervert, Kazuharu Fukuyama, whose sister, a practicing witch, thinks Yukinari is her soul mate so she has him kidnapped by her followers for a ritual ceremony in the school gym—pentagram generously included—and, wouldn't you know it, Miharu can detonate on demand...a handy skill for even the stickiest situation.

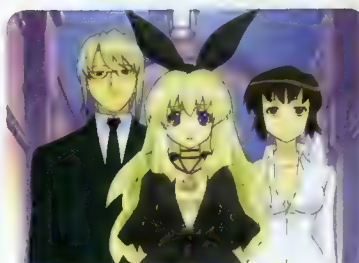
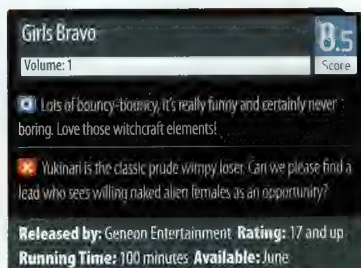
Commando housekeepers, rogue demons and full-scale boobage can't be far behind. If you like your freak shows with breast and panty shots a-plenty, you'll surely exclaim "bravo!" But mommas beware; this here anime is packed with substantial naughty bits, beyond the usual fan service.

Dave Halverson

Yukinari running for his life...and virginity.



"...she has him kidnapped by her followers for a ritual ceremony in the school gym—pentagram generously included..."



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**Anime
Works**

Ninja Scroll TV: Ultimate Edition

Box Set

Released by: Urban Vision Rating: 15 and up Running Time: 325 minutes Available: June

The collectible tin is a must-have for action fans, while the collector's edition is a nice way to see the series in one sitting. If you own the series already, you're essentially spending \$50+ on a bonus disc and a limited edition Jubei figure.

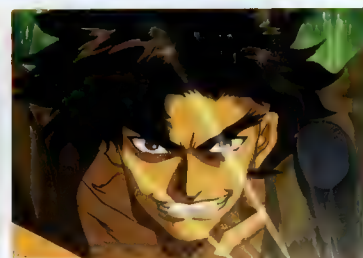
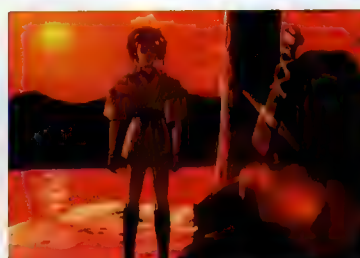
9.0
Score

In case you were drifting in outer space last year, Urban Vision finally released the long-awaited and much-anticipated follow up to *Ninja Scroll*, which featured everyone's favorite stalwart ninja, Jubei Kibagami, traveling the countryside of Edo-period Japan, fighting to keep the Dragon Stone and the treasure it conceals from the evil Kimon Clan, who would use it for unspeakable evil, and the Hiruko Clan, who seek its power to free them from a curse that forces them to live in the darkness. What he didn't bargain for was the fine print, aka the only person in the world who can use it, The Light Maiden—obviously sought by both parties to carry out their master plans, and one

major pain in ass. Bloody, demonic ninja action ensues.

The TV Box Set—nicely packaged with all-new art—includes 13 episodes on three discs, while a special edition version limited to 20,000 pieces will be sold with a never-before-seen Jubei action figure plus a fourth disc loaded with special features. If you own the series separately, it bears mentioning that the figure and additional content more than warrant purchasing the tin (retail from \$53 to \$59.95), and if, by chance, you have an action jones and didn't catch the series, well, it's a must-have. Volume 2 dips a little, but things certainly end with a *Ninja Scroll*-size bang. Dave Halverson

"...if, by chance, you have an action jones and didn't catch the series, well, it's a must-have."



Jubei's at his happiest just before the moment of impact...or a nice nap.

Jubei-Chan 2: The Counterattack of Siberia Yagyu

Volume: 1—"Resurrection"

Released by: Geneon Entertainment Rating: 13 and up Running Time: 100 minutes Available: June

Swords, swords, swords! You can never get enough of those gorgeous hyper-stylized clashes! Jiyu's alter-ego is the winner, kept secret in the world—not to mention she's replacing a lot of front doors thanks to intruders.

8.0
Score

We've all tried to live up to expectations, taken on responsibilities we didn't ask for, and perky teen Jiyu Nanohana is no exception. She thought she had more than fulfilled her destiny as the legendary swordsman Yagyu Jubei before she removed her heart-shaped "lovely eyepatch" for the last time... she was wrong. Instead, an exiled clan, defeated by her ancestor, still seeks revenge 300 years later; not to mention there's a young girl who appears to be the blonde-haired daughter of Jubei himself—Freesia Yagyu, frozen in ice until now—who's demanding the title of Jubei. The battle for the "lovely eyepatch" is on, and no one knows who the rightful heir really is. Writer/director

Akitaro Daichi's flair for dramedy takes an interesting twist here as comedy turns to drama in an instant—much like Jiyu when she transforms and back again—but there's no time for segues; black turns to white without so much as a flash of grey.

J2 is also heavily referential to the original Jubei saga (second-tier characters, fully aware they're in a sequel, crack wise of it frequently) so newcomers may want to brush up on past plot points if not take in the entire sordid affair. With action in spades and buttery animation courtesy of Madhouse, even if the wobbly comedy-to-drama ratio throws you, at least your eyes will be busy with the curvaceous cast members and smashing clashes.

Jim Dewey

"The battle for the 'lovely eyepatch' is on, and no one knows who the rightful heir really is."



Now that's one lovely eyepatch!

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TENCHI MUYO!
RYO OHKI

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The gang's all back and their world gets turned upside-down when they receive a strange visitor. While Ryoko, Ayeka, and the others are arguing, Tenchi collapses from exhaustion. At the same time the mysterious Lady Tokimi dispatches the warrior Z to Earth in order to learn more about Tenchi and his connection to Washu and Tsunami. What will be Tenchi's fate?



Gilgamesh

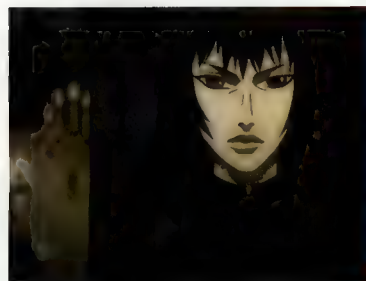


An interview with Steve Foster on his latest localization project, *Gilgamesh*

Gilgamesh is an anime quite unlike any you've ever seen before, about opposing forces vying for control of the world as society struggles to recover from a global terrorist attack. Between the mutants of Orga and the black leather-clad army of Gilgamesh, a brother and sister hold the key to the world's salvation. Here's the lowdown (part 1; look for more behind-the-scenes coming soon to playmagazine.com) on the formidable challenge of localizing the most haunting anime to come along since *Soulfinder*. Dave Halverson

"...Gilgamesh is very intellectual and moody. I like your Kubrick reference."

Steve Foster, director, *Gilgamesh*



Interview

Steve Foster, director, *Gilgamesh*

play: You've been blessed with yet another obscure (in a great way) title. But I imagine *Gilgamesh* was a lot easier to wrap your brain around than *Milk Chan*...or was it?

Steve Foster: It was, actually. *Milk* was just so much fun. It was a lot of work, over a year of production, but it was incredibly rewarding. Then *Gilgamesh*

comes up and it was a total 180 turnaround. Going from happy-crazy-foul-mouth-funny to, well, a much, much darker place.

Are you pretty much the go-to guy when it comes to the eclectic stuff? Why do you suppose that is?

We all hopscotch a lot. Jin (Chung) and

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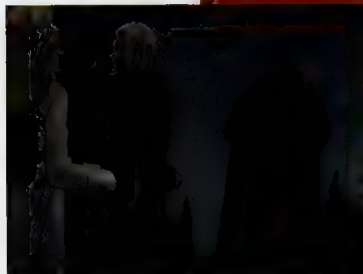
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As dark as Gilgamesh looks, it's more so in the flesh—a truly haunting slice of animated life.



Kyle (Jones) have to go from anime to live action, so I'm not gonna complain. But, to answer your question, part of me would probably love to get some show like *Dazungo Miraho* that's just mindless anime crap that feeds the masses. But that's not why they have me here. I get the shows that need a little extra finessing. That's cool with me. I mean, when you're dead, what do you want on your resume—*Monster-in-Law* or *Crash*—you know?

The genius of *Monster-in-Law*, of course "snicker"! *Gilgamesh* is as non-traditional an anime as I've ever seen. It's hard to put your finger on. I see influences ranging from Kubrick to Copolla, to horror, to sci-fi. What struck you the most in choosing a direction for the English-language version?

Alice Fulks, who plays the Countess, was surprised at how sophisticated it is. And *Gilgamesh* is very intellectual and moody. I like your Kubrick reference. Not everyone got *The Shining* when it came out, but now pretty much everyone realizes it's brilliant. *Gilgamesh* is like that. It's just so f***ing smart. You really have to pay attention. The clues are subtle, the pace is deliberate. So the vocal direction was all very subdued, very sexy, very mysterious and dark. Even walk-ons like the concierge have a delivery that's creepy. She may be saying "Would you like to play the piano?" but the direction and sound of the read is "Can I steal your soul and sell it to Satan?"

Ah, my kind of show. How much will the English vocal differ from the Japanese? Is there a call for considerable re-writing or alteration?

I'm famous—or infamous, depending on who you ask—for changing. This is actually the most dramatic example of staying true to the original translation. It was the first time we've been on a paperless script. My executive producer Joey Goubeaud designed the studio so we'd have two monitors for the actors—one showing the anime, the other showing the actual translation. Then we would script the lines directly from the translation as we

recorded. It was an amazing process and the actors loved it. No more paper scripts and rewriting lines in the margins, which is a huge pain in the ass. And it really allowed for such a fresh take on the deliveries. As the actors said, they felt like they were taking the journey with the characters, reacting more honestly to scenes as they happened. It was a huge bonus.

That's some pretty great writing then. I'm as amazed as I am perplexed after two episodes. How does *Gilgamesh* progress? Is it more sci-fi, horror, surreal? Does it remain dark and somber?

All the elements in the beginning grow in darkness and intensity as the show progresses. It gets very dark. It's sick. And we loved it. The actors, the engineers, everyone was crazy for *Gilgamesh* because you truly can't trust *anyone's* motives in the show. There are some real monstrous characters—and some very disturbing monsters in this anime. There's this army, The Blattaria, that shows up in the third volume and they have these sick phallic masks they wear. And when they take those masks off—I think it's in volume seven or so—I just freaked when I saw what was under those masks. This show is sick! It's wonderful in its wicked, black heart.

Is that why you went for broke in terms of atmosphere and getting the actors into *Gilgamesh* mode?

The cast is incredible, and we all pretty much had this dark pact going. We made a mix CD of death metal the actors listened to before their sessions. Everyone had to wear black when they recorded. Even Adam Jones, our engineer, and I wore black every day to work. And the studio was set up with skeletal trees that were spray painted black; there were hanging candles, statues, destroyed art, floating black and grey silks. It put you in a mood. I mean, some days you just wanted to get the hell out of there, get drunk and watch *South Park* to wash the darkness off of you, but you do what you gotta do to

make something amazing. And we did. The actors were so dedicated. It was tough to be in such a dark, evil mind space for hours at a time. Lesley Tesh said it was like being in a Marilyn Manson video every day, but Lesley's very rock-and-roll so she dug it. It was harder for some of the other kids, though.

We were hoping to show some of that, I guess online though... I see some familiar names in the credits, but some familiar faces missing. Was this an easy one to cast? Where's our girls Jessica and Luci?

So many of our heavy hitters were in another psychic show and I just didn't want any duplication happening, you know? It would be like seeing Halle Berry as Storm and then she's Catwoman. And we all know how that shit works out. And I think you'll be surprised who shows up in later volumes. We've got some stealth casting comin' up that'll freak out some fans.

So how did you go about casting the roles? Did they pop in as you were watching or did you do more auditions?

It sounds weird, but I tried to cast vocally as well as physically, match a look as well. Logan Keslar is long and lean and sexy

like Novem. Lesley looks like Uno. Brittney Karbowski's a fresh-faced girl with an edge; so's Fuko. It was a neat experiment, and I needed people who would take the journey with the characters. Truly, the actors know as much backstory as their characters do. So when Tatsuya has a personal revelation, an identity crisis, if you will, Blake Shepard has one right along with him. Put it this way: Alice Fulks and Paul Oddo know a lot more about Shelley Black's character than Shelley does. And that dark power comes into play in their performance.

There's a character named Sex...what's that about?

You've got a dirty mind. It's Latin for "six." But, yeah, this show is very sexy, very sensual. And, often, it's a weapon. Just look at how Novem works over those kids. Always invading their personal space—and, later, quite literally, actually.

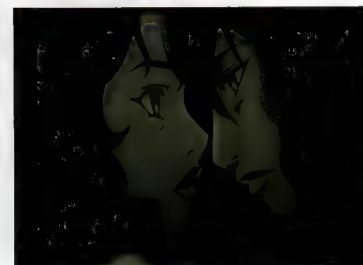
We'll be watching. Thanks, Steve. As usual, you're the man.

That's so funny. But that's Don Rush. (Whose *Full Metal Panic Fumoffu* is hysterical, by the way.)

I say as much in this very issue. Way ahead of you.

"We made a mix CD of death metal the actors listened to before their sessions. Everyone had to wear black when they recorded."

Steve Foster, director, *Gilgamesh*



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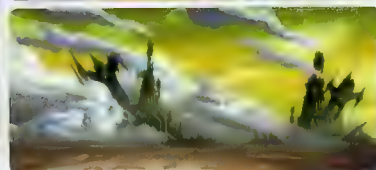
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Released by: FUNimation Available: August

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Otogi Zoshi

Released by: Anime Works
Now Playing: Volume 1

Production I.G.'s sweeping epic about a samurai girl's quest in her brother's stead to recover artifacts that will bring new life to Japan. Incredibly stylized samurai action and Heian-era political drama—not to be missed.



Sadamitsu the Destroyer The Complete Collection

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Fight! Iczer-One

Released by: Anime Works
Now Playing: 108-minute movie

In this choice bit of old-school anime, the beautiful blonde Iczer-One must bond with a human girl to beat back forces invading Earth, namely Iczer Two, Three and Four. Lots of battles, monster goo and girls in assault suits gone wild.

read this



TOH UBUKATA

MAMI ITOH



Pilgrim Jäger

Released by: Anime Works Now Reading: Volume 2

Italian history, exquisite art, a deep, transfixing read, action, intrigue...the spear of Longinus. *Pilgrim Jäger* is truly a rarity among manga. Molto benne!



Legends from Darkwood: The Unicorn Hunters

Released by: Antarctic Press Now Reading: Chapters 1-4

The horror! Unicorn hunters? But that's not the half of it. How about an entire communal infrastructure (including the dinner menu) that revolves around *using* what they don't sell. Fantasy rams head-first into technology in Darkwood.



IDENTITY

Released by: Tokyopop Now Reading: Volume 1

If you like .hack//Sign but wished it was a tad more mature, IDENTITY will make you very, very happy. I know so, because I'm really happy. RPG heaven this is.



How Not to Draw Manga

Released by: Antarctic Press

From the publishers of the *How To Draw Manga* series, this guide reads like a punch to the gut—only it might make you glad it hurts...from laughter.



Volcano High

Released by: Media Blaster Press
Now Reading: Prelude (prequel to the movie)

Try real hard to forget that MTV butchered the original kung fu cinema and read the real thing. Super high-powered martial arts explode on every page. With names like "Ice Jade," "Soulless Demonic Blade" and "Pine Forest, One Crane," you can't go wrong.



Heaven Above Heaven

Released by: Tokyopop
Now Reading: Volume 1

Whenever ancient prophecy tells of a child born to bring about Armageddon, you know we're in for some quality entertainment, especially when it's...a girl? Don't let the poorly drawn cover fool you; look inside Heaven Above Heaven.

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His journey begins but does fate control his final destination?

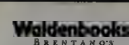
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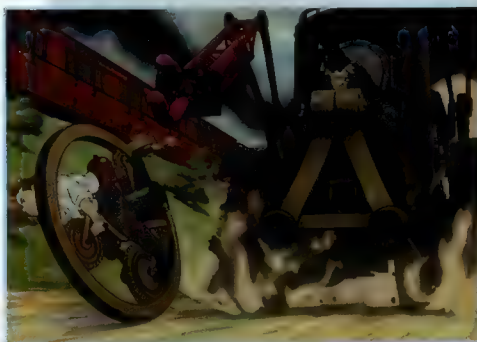
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- 04 **Spirited Away** buena vista home entertainment
- 05 **The Cat Returns** buena vista home entertainment
- 06 **Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence** dreamworks
- 07 **Ninja Scroll TV Ultimate Edition** urban vision
- 08 **Samurai Champloo** geneon entertainment
- 09 **Paranoia Agent** geneon entertainment
- 10 **Appleseed Limited Edition** geneon entertainment



Play Magazine Top Ten

- 01 **Steamboy** columbia tristar home entertainment
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- 03 **Fafner** adv films
- 04 **Full Metal Panic Fumoffu** adv films
- 05 **The Melody of Oblivion** geneon entertainment
- 06 **Jubei Chan 2** geneon entertainment
- 07 **Gilgamesh** adv films
- 08 **Burst Angel** funimation productions
- 09 **Gunslinger Girl** funimation productions
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Dave Halverson

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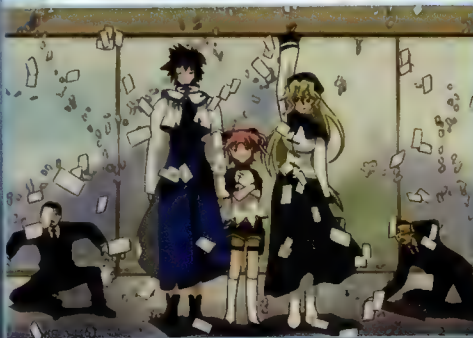


Readers' Anime Top Five

- 01 **Gunslinger Girl** funimation productions
- 02 **Burst Angel** funimation productions
- 03 **Steamboy** columbia tristar home entertainment
- 04 **Tenjho Tenge** geneon entertainment
- 05 **Elfen Lied** adv films

Jim Dewey

- 01 **R.O.D -the TV-** geneon entertainment
- 02 **Shrine of the Morning Mist** anime works
- 03 **Ghost in the Shell: SAC** manga/bandai entertainment
- 04 **Shadow Star Narutaru** central park media
- 05 **Cromartie High School** adv films



Play Magazine Manga Top Five

- 01 **Pilgrim Jäger** animeworks
- 02 **Legends From Darkwood** antarctic press
- 03 **iD_eNTITY** tokyopop manga
- 04 **Heaven Above Heaven** tokyopop manga
- 05 **Volcano High** media blasters press

Nelson Lui

- 01 **Jubei Chan 2** geneon entertainment
- 02 **Full Metal Panic Fumoffu** adv films
- 03 **Elfen Lied** adv films
- 04 **Piano** right stuff international
- 05 **Girls Bravo** geneon entertainment



Play Magazine Music Top Five

- 01 **Samurai Champloo OST** geneon anime music
- 02 **Tenjho Tenge OST 2** geneon anime music
- 03 **Paranoia Agent OST** geneon anime music
- 04 **L'Arc-en-Ciel - AWAKE** tofu records
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From the Director of Fruits Basket

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Motor Mouth Mayhem

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when she acts on her plan, the consequences aren't exactly what she expected!

Akito and his gang of hooligans are at it again, wreaking havoc in the classroom. But has Sana discovered because of her arch enemy, Akito Hayama?

novelist mother wants her to succeed, and she has a strange relationship with her Agent, Rei. Then there is

There's the constant strain of filming a television series, commercials, and even movies. Her award-winning

However, Sana's life isn't all it's cracked up to be. appear her life is charmed, and free of worry and regret.

Sana Kurata is one of the stars in the hit series, "Child's Toy," which broadcasts every afternoon. It would

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Kevin Eastman

Kevin Eastman loves new media and all the possibilities it offers, but for him, at the end of the day, there's nothing better than the smell of a comic book hot off the press—"a 'thing' that you can feel, hold, touch—read, re-read anytime, anywhere—other tools or equipment to do so—just you and it." Here's what the co-creator of TMNT and publisher of Heavy Metal is up to in the film, comics and game space...

Interview

Kevin Eastman, comic creator/publisher

play: I've been reading (and experiencing) Heavy Metal since 1977 and have always wondered how you go about choosing your content. Can you touch on that process?

Kevin Eastman: Ahh, a fellow reader since the first issue! I found the first issue on the newsstand in April 1977, and it changed my life. Some of my favorite artists within (to name a few) like Richard Corben and Vaughn Bode excited me

enough to look for more of their work, which led me to underground comics, self-publishing—so when I created the Turtles, I wanted to write and draw my own comic and have full control, which allowed me to profit from my creation, and with that money I bought Heavy Metal Magazine in 1991. Cool beans.

As the guy that now gets to personally pick what goes in the magazine each issue, I just pick the work I love—the



Early Turtles had no shell

kind of things I would like to read—and hope it works for the rest of the fans, which it seems to, as our sales keep going up. All of the work I select from has been published in Europe first—then the publishers there send me copies to consider for the magazine, and from that amazing body of submissions is where I pick the artwork/stories for each issue.

How has fantasy/sci-fi storytelling changed over the years? Do you think the digital age has helped or hindered the genre?

In many ways, I really don't think it has changed that much—other than being updated to current trends and created/done with more insight. If you look at old copies of pulp paperbacks like "Amazing Stories" and what they thought the future might be like [and compare it] to what's being written today and what writers today think the future might be like, they are really quite a lot alike. The digital age, especially in films, has given creators that were influenced by all of the above a medium to bring it to life [on] the big/small screen with a greater believability—to all our good fortune.

The first Heavy Metal film stands as not only a classic, but one of very few of its kind, being theatrically released adult-

oriented feature-length animation. Did you see it during its original run? Do you have a favorite segment?

A fan of the film once told me he thought the first *Heavy Metal* film had "some of the best animation in the world, and some of the worst animation in the world—all at the same time—and I loved every second of it!" To which I totally agree. It was the first of its kind in many ways; it came out at the right time and place for it to work the way it did, and it would be very difficult to try and make the same kind of film work today. I think *The Animatrix* came the closest in recent years to a *Heavy Metal*-style film, a trend I hope we all get to see more of in the future.

I went to see the first *Heavy Metal* film in the theaters in 1981. I had been after this young lady for many months, and when she finally agreed to go out with me, I took her to see *Heavy Metal*: the movie! She never spoke to me again—she told all her friends that I took her to a cartoon full of sex and drug use, so I must have a lot of problems...funny how things work out.

My favorite story was the "Den" story, but it didn't come close to Richard Corben's original comic "Den," and so it was a bittersweet favorite.

When all was said and done, were you happy with how *Heavy Metal 2000* (Fakk2) came out? You seemed mighty stressed towards the end...

To say the least. When I started out to make *Heavy Metal 2000*, I decided I wanted to do it as one story instead of trying to do a bunch of short stories that Ivan Reitman did so well with the first one—a tough act to follow for sure—so I wanted to make my own *Heavy Metal* film. The concept for the film was based on a graphic novel I wrote called the Melting Pot, and I combined it with an idea I had for a character based on my wife, Julie Strain. The stress and the problems from the film came from the companies I ended up working with; I had a lot of people that had control over the film because of

The July issue of *Heavy Metal* features the Darkwatch graphic novel.

the money they put into it, telling me the story I wanted to tell wasn't *Heavy Metal* enough—which was kind of sad, because most of the people telling me the film wasn't *Heavy Metal* enough had never even read a single copy of *Heavy Metal*. A classic Hollywood excuse for sure—blaming everyone else for making the film not all that I wanted it to be. But I only blame myself for letting them get away with it, which is why I'll never do another animated film I can't have complete control over—that way if it sucks, I can only really blame myself.

You've been tight with (the amazing) Simon Bisley for a long time... Any other artists you'd like or plan to collaborate with?

Too many to name really. I respect so many artists/writers working in comics today—they all have wonderful, inspired visions, things that given the right freedom and situation could create images and stories that would blow us all away—and I look forward to seeing all that. But for now, any and every chance I have to sink my teeth into a project with Simon Bisley, he'll always be my first choice. We have a bit of a link—and no matter if people love or hate the work we create together, we have a blast telling the kind of stories we'd like to read. I guess that is what it is really all about.

How do you feel print media has changed over the years?

"...I just pick the work I love—the kind of things I would like to read—and hope it works for the rest of the fans..."

Kevin Eastman, comic creator/publisher



Tools, I guess. Better printing formats, computer coloring—inspirations from so many different kinds of entertainment. Like so many other creative exploration outlets, print/comics/graphic storytelling reflects the time and sensibilities of the world around us. As they always have. Cool beans.

Is the *Heavy Metal* demographic pretty much 25 and up, or has the mag continued to attract substantial new young readers over the years? Although the main fan base is 25 and up, say around 40 to 50 percent (guys that have been reading the mag almost from issue one), most of the new readers, the growth in the last 15 years, are from people that have discovered it since I took over and have been doing

more to promote it—letting the fans of comics know that once you grow out of Spider-Man but still love comics, there's something else out there for you. Not that we ever really grow out of comics we loved as a kid, but when you're ready for something different and cool, *Heavy Metal* is one of the few places you'll find it.

So you're going live action with your film endeavors...theatrical or direct to DVD? Will this be a compilation, or will each work be released separately? The first series of live action films we'll be doing are going to be fairly small budget direct-to-DVD films. I'm looking for first-time director/writers with a vision—and that are driven. Much like when I did the first Turtles comics.

there was nothing but the will to do the best I could, with the tools I had (me) and tell the kind of story I would like to read. No company executives telling me what kind of comic I should do, especially when they've never written or drawn one themselves, and in this case no studio persons that have never written or directed anything telling me what kind of film they think an artist should make. With Cinema Libre, we'll give them the tools and the forum to create something cool and original—or, at least, that is the plan—we'll just have to wait to see what happens—although the scripts I've been getting are well in the zone to be something special.

Why live action over pure CG? Won't the merging of CG and live action call for massive effects budgets?

With the kind of budgets we're working with, we really need the effects to be "in camera." Think Sam Raimi and the first *Evil Dead* film: be creative, figure out ways to make something special with the limited tools you have—that, to me, inspires greatness. No CG crutches or fixes; the story has to be there, and getting it told in the best way possible—with style—is what I'm hoping for.

Don't suppose you can give us a hint as to what stories we might see?

Much like the magazine, what can be Heavy Metal has a fairly wide range—yet still needs to be in the same neighborhood. Sorta sci-fi, adult, a bit of an edge, but can exist in urban, steampunk, barbarian, Goth, film noir and other worlds.... Beyond that, you'll have to wait and see what we come up with.

Will we see name actors or are you going with fresh faces?

I do hope so, but that is not really that important. Yes, names bring butts to the seats to see the story these folks we'll be working with want to tell—but we're hoping, however foolish this may sound, that we'll get them with the story.

Because you co-created them, I have to ask: are you happy with the course TMNT has taken becoming more kid friendly?

One-hundred percent. Because Peter Laird and I created them, self-published the stories we wanted to tell, and at the end of the day controlled everything that was to be done or not done with them, we're very happy. As I mentioned above, when we did the first issues, and even the later issues of TMNT, we always did the stories we wanted. When we agreed to have them become a kids' property, we, for the first time, knew we were writing

stories for a much younger fan base. All the adjustments done to the Turtles for that audience were with our 100 percent blessings and input. The fact that they translated and worked as well as they did might have something to say about where our "never grow up" mindset was at in

the first place. Regardless, an adventure beyond our wildest dreams and then some.

I (we) have always hoped for a live-action CG Turtles along the lines of your original work... Are you still privy to

direct the project, which should go into full production shortly. Keep your eyes on the trades for the announcement of the studio that will be lucky enough to partner with us on it.

You've dabbled in video games—*Geomatrix* was great—but never an HM-scope epic adventure game. Is this something you see yourself doing in the future? You can produce a great game for \$3-5 million, far less than a film, and the upside is pretty huge...

Yes, after trying a few options on the game front, I decided I wanted to hold back and wait for just the right deal, with the right company, to do a game that does the Heavy Metal brand justice. This past E3 we've finally found a home, and a partner that can make it all work the way it should. Look for more details here shortly.

You're around anime and manga a lot at cons...are you into either? Anything you like in particular?

Anime more than manga, although I am a fan of both. *Cowboy Bebop*, *Blue Submarine Six*, *Jin Roh*, *Spriggn* and *Ghost in the Shell* are near the top of my list, along with many more of the classics (*Akira*), but one of my more recent favorites is a series called *FLCL*. Beyond those I have tons more I watch, too many to list here.

Ah, yes, *FLCL* is magic. What else lies in store for Kevin Eastman? I wouldn't mind a line of McFarlane HM figures... *Tarna*, *Den*, *Awakenings*, *Fistful of Blood*...imagine the possibilities!!

Kevin Eastman hopes to keep doing comics, kind of returning to my first love, and the reason I got into the business in the first place, and I have many things in the works—but they'll be a while in coming, as I have too many other distractions at the moment. I want to direct one of the live-action films; *Fistful of Blood* will be mine, based on a story I wrote, and completed with Simon Bisley. I want to do more animation, games, toys—especially of the quality of Todd's toys. My home studio looks like a Todd McFarlane showroom—I pretty much have everything he's created. Todd is one of the best things to happen to toys since the creation of G.I. Joe. Hope to team up with him one day soon.

Thanks, Kevin; good luck with the new ventures. We'll be watching and reading.



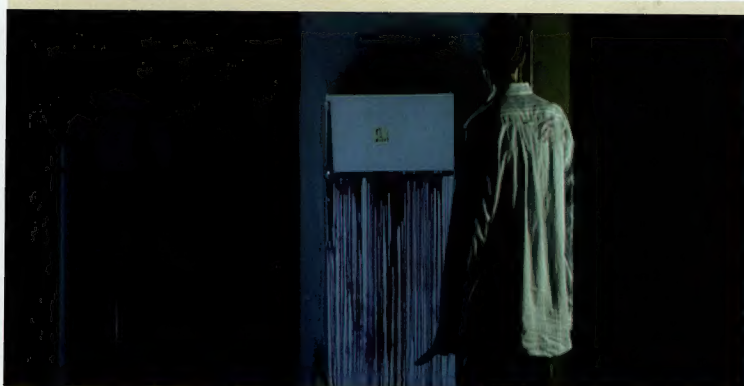
More early Turtles work...Donatello, the barbarian?

Turtle activity? Any hope?

Yes, I'm kept informed on most all of what is going on with the TMNTs, although Peter points, and quite well I might add, all the creative work on the green guys. I brought the deal to Mirage (the TMNT parent company) that will fund a full CG TMNT feature film. Kevin Munroe (a massively talented guy) has written the script and will

"The fact that they translated...might have something to say about where our 'never grow up' mindset was at in the first place."

Kevin Eastman, comic creator/publisher



The Machinist

Starring: Christian Bale, Jennifer Jason Leigh, John Sharian
Director: Brad Anderson
Released By: Paramount
Rated: R

It's not just Christian Bale's horrific physical transformation that gets to you in *The Machinist*; it's also his unsettling performance as a factory worker ostensibly teetering on the edge of mental collapse. Bale, dropping more than 60 pounds for the role, plays the part of Trevor Reznik, a beleaguered factory worker haunted by a co-worker who no one outside himself believes even exists. Disliked by everyone around him and grasping for

any sort of feeling in loose relationships with a prostitute and waitress at an airport diner, Trevor begins to drift further into an insomnia-induced madness, threatening everyone around him, even finding cryptic messages in his apartment he believes were planted. Part of the movie's hold stems from the ambiguity of the strange occurrences, which keep us constantly on edge, wondering if there are greater horrors lying ahead, or simply a man caught in his own personal nightmare. The movie ratchets up the dour mood with cold colors and drab production design, sinking us into Trevor's unsettling world and building to a satisfying, unexpected climax that, while a little thin on deeper analysis, leaves us entertained. Brady Flechter

Movie: B+ **Extras:** C+

Cursed: Unrated Version

Starring: Christina Ricci, Joshua Jackson, Jesse Eisenberg
Director: Wes Craven
Released By: Dimension Home Video
Rated: NR

If you 1) think there's call for another horror movie spoof and 2) would actually take the time to sit through it, then maybe, just maybe *Cursed* won't make you want to call a werewolf on Christina Ricci's agent. Directed by the Count Chocula of the genre, Wes Craven does his best here to marry the classic werewolf tale with a dose of camp and an episode of the OC and

ends up with a steaming pile of latex wolf poo. Overused plot devices abound—the empty parking garage, the dark house with the mysteriously open window, tired misdirection, you name it—along with more stereotypical fodder than one movie could possibly ever need and a myriad of movie mistakes too numerous to count. The entire thing looks like a cheap *Buffy* episode, if only it were anywhere near as good. The non-rating really doesn't do much either; we get some more latex goo and that's about it...it's actually hilarious. Not scary, not funny, not very entertaining; we're a long way from *Elm Street*. Dave Halverson

Movie: D **Extras:** C



White Noise

Starring: Michael Keaton, Deborah Kara Unger, Chandra West
Director: Geoffrey Sax
Released By: Universal
Rated: PG-13

Before accomplished architect Jonathan Rivers (Michael Keaton) can begin mourning the mysterious death of his wife, he's given creepy hope that he can contact her from the other side through Electronic Voice Phenomenon, locating her presence through the static of electronic devices. As Jonathan increasingly tampers with the hi-

fi play-pen he's set up in his highly stylized architect living room, rain constantly falling in the distance, he begins to find what he was looking for, along with contacting the evildoers lurking in the noise, and we begin to contact drowsiness as the intriguing setup devolves to cheap, increasingly lazy attempts at scares. Even in the more interesting moments, the film loses its edge by the minute, crashing toward complete implausibility.

Extras: Deleted scenes, actual real-life EVP recording sessions, interviews with "experts," and a guide to making your own EVP recordings. Brady Flechter

Movie: C- **Extras:** C



The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou

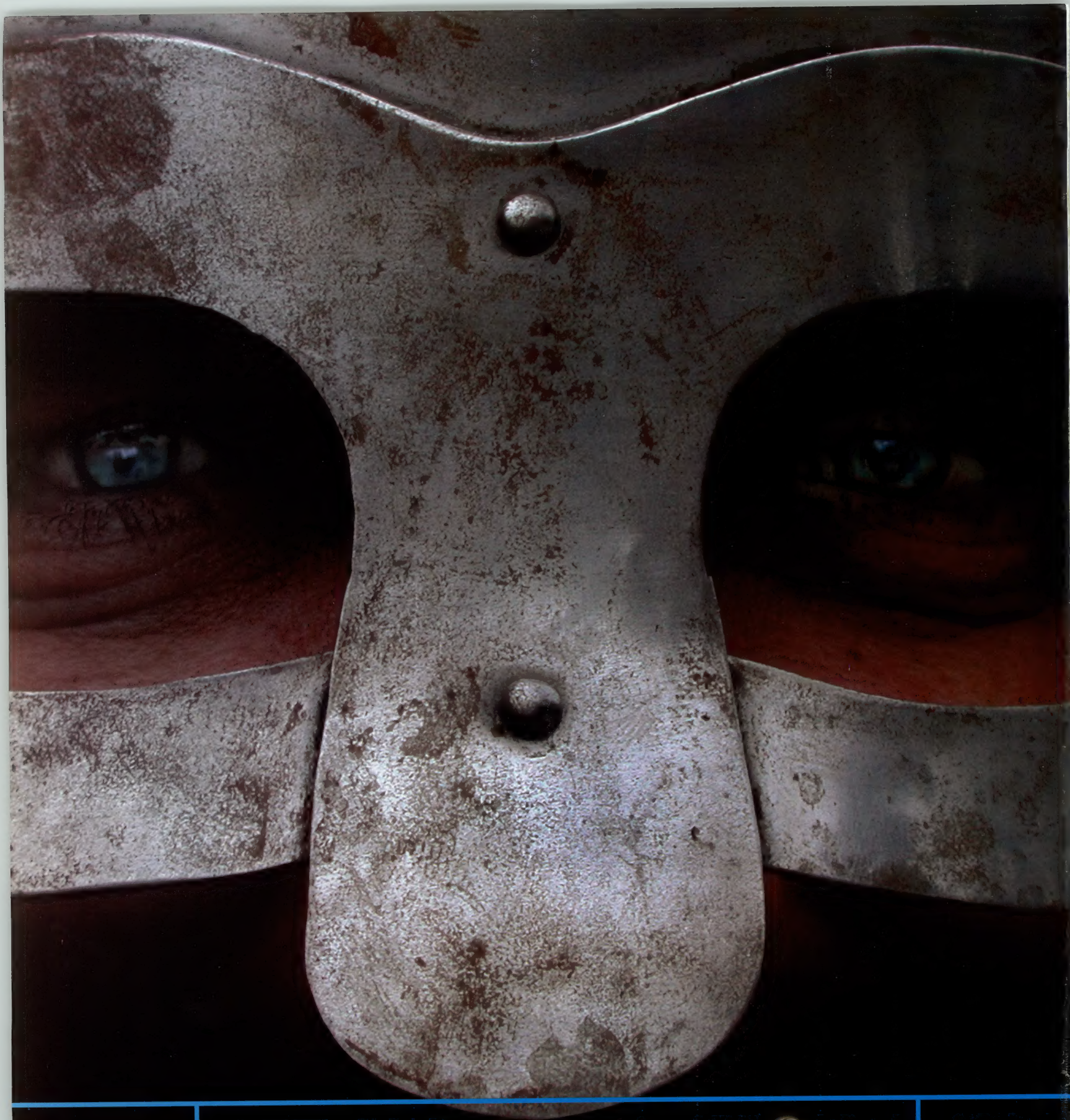
Starring: Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Cate Blanchett
Director: Wes Anderson
Released By: Buena Vista Home Entertainment
Rated: R

There's more to the droll *The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou* than you might initially expect, but finding its biggest pleasures takes wading through a precarious number of scene misfires and a plot that winds up nicely but stalls toward a

misplaced climax. The movie stars and is humorously carried by Bill Murray as Steve Zissou, an eccentric ocean explorer and documentarian who surrounds himself with an offbeat speedo-wearing crew, including a stripper who enjoys hanging out topless. When Zissou's good friend is chomped by some mysterious sea creature while shooting his latest adventure, he sets off to find this killer "jaguar shark," awkwardly flirt with a pregnant reporter, battle pirates and connect with his just-discovered son. Like in *Rushmore* and, subsequently, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, director Wes Anderson brings his strange and delightful sensibilities to a film that plays little straight. But unlike his previous greats, *Life Aquatic* is more a pleasant comedy that thinks it's more clever than it ends up being. Brady Flechter

Movie: B- **Extras:** B





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